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TWENTIES

BOOTLEG ANGEL

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ONE DEATH IN THE RED

Bootleg Angel

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TIMES MIRROR

For Lionel Stevens
– a hair of the dog!

A New English Library Original Publication 1977
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FIRST NEL PAPERBACK EDITION APRIL 1977

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NEL Books are published by
New English Library Limited from Barnard's Inn, Holborn, London EC1N 2JR
Made and printed in Great Britain by Hunt Barnard Printing Ltd., Aylesbury, Bucks.

45003171 3

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Among the many books, newspaper files, old magazines and contemporary street maps providing background material for this story Don Maclean's *Pictorial History of the Mafia* (Pyramid Books, New York), F. D. Pasley's *Al Capone – the Biography of a Self-Made Man* (Faber and Faber, London), the late Kenneth Allsop's *The Bootleggers* (Hutchinson, London) and *Hear Me Talkin' To Ya*, edited by Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff (Rinehart, New York), have been especially useful. I am grateful to the publishers for permission to quote from these books.

I am also indebted to the following publishers for permission to quote short chapter-head extracts from the works of their authors: The Viking Press and Random House, New York (for William Faulkner); The Bodley Head, London (for F. Scott Fitzgerald); Jonathan Cape, London (for Ernest Hemingway); and Charles Scribner's Sons, New York (for Thomas Wolfe).

Sweet Lorraine is published by the Lawrence Wright Music Co; the new lyrics for *Ugly Chile* are the author's own; the blues couplets quoted are traditional.

E. M.

PART 1

Chicago . . . where the bulls and the foxes live well and the lambs wind up head-down from the hook.

NELSON ALGREN

1 BRUNO FARRELL

Bill McSwiggin got his outside the Pony Inn, Cicero, on 27 April, 1926. Bill was Assistant D.A. of Cook County, a young dude who'd sent more killers to Death Row than was good for him. The typewriter that wrote him off also put a coupla torpedoes six feet under, but Myles O'Donnell, the bootlegger, and another professional escaped. They never did finger the guys who did it – or figure out why. Five gets you ten the kid was tied in with the mobs some way. Why else would he keep that kinda company? They suspected Capone, natural: he was suspected of everything. Especially since the Pony Inn had switched from Capone beer at sixty the barrel to O'Donnell's at fifty. In Cicero, already! Smack in the centre of the Big Guy's territory! But they never could prove nothing. Like they never proved it was Capone's hoods who tried to lay it on Schemer Drucci and Hymie Weiss on South Michigan twice in one week. Weiss and the Schemer was dead lucky to come outa those ambushes breathing. But they didn't squeal. All the same, those two and O'Donnell and the other Northsiders was plenty mad at Capone. So they decided to rub him out. That's the way it went in the booze war.

The hands of the eight-day clock above the cash register in the Hawthorne Restaurant had just jerked on to 1.15 p.m. when the first shots blazed out over the noise of the traffic on West 22nd Street. Early autumn sunlight gleamed on the double line of street-car tracks running down the centre of the eighty-foot boulevard. It winked on the lamps and coachwork of the automobiles parked beside the curb, noosed a half circle of shadow over the crowd beneath the fluted glass awning of the Anton Hotel, and dazzled drivers pulling up for the automatic red and green stop-go light at the intersection with 48th Avenue. Even during the lunch hour the sidewalks were busy.

The suburb of Cicero – forty minutes west of Chicago's city centre on the elevated – was crowded with strangers, in for the big event of the year: the fall meet at the Hawthorne racetrack,

just outside the city limits a few blocks to the south. The first field of the first day was due to be sent away in exactly one hour and fifteen minutes.

Outside the paint shop, the hardware store, the radio specialist's, and the delicatessen, grocery, laundry and barber's shop that formed the street frontage of the Anton Hotel and the Hawthorne on the forty-eight hundred block, out-of-town punters jostled bookmakers, touts, local businessmen and housewives with market baskets and baby-carriages. Terry Druggan and Frankie Lake, two of the bigtime beer barons who owed more than half a million dollars income tax on the profits of Prohibition, were waiting in the lobby of the Anton Hotel while the desk clerk called them a cab. They had a thoroughbred from their Sanola Farm stables running in the first race. Through the glass doors they could see Clyde Freeman of May, Louisiana, settling his wife and five-year-old son in the tonneau of a Buick sedan. The Freemans, up from the south on vacation, had eaten and were hoping to make the first race too. Beyond the car, Louis Barko, gambler and smalltime mobster, crossed the street at a run: he was a little late for a date with the Big Guy.

Capone was finishing his lunch in the Hawthorne Restaurant. He was sitting with his bodyguard, Slippery Frank Rio, at the last of fifteen tables lined against the west wall. The east wall of the long, narrow room was taken up by a lunch counter. Both men wore pearl grey fedoras with a black band; both faced the double doors at the entrance. A waiter in a long white apron set down two cups of coffee on the white-tiled table. Capone nodded and raised the cup to his lips.

It was at that moment that the car roared across the intersection into the forty-eight hundred block. It was disguised as a police patrol car – a black tourer with a gong clanging on the left-hand running-board. It raced along at over fifty miles an hour . . . and there was a flame stabbing at the sidewalk from the muzzle of the Thompson submachine-gun held by the man beside the driver.

At once there was pandemonium. The holiday crowds screamed, scattered, threw themselves flat. On the far side of the street, faces appeared at the windows of doctors', lawyers' and real estate brokers' offices above the stores. Men lay piled one on top of another in the doorway of a cigar store. Two guards ran out with drawn revolvers at the top of the steps leading to the Pinkert State Bank. A girl in the florist's dropped twenty dollarsworth of red roses, and a small boy was pulled back into the corner pharmacy with an unfinished bandage trailing from his grazed knee.

Abruptly the shocking detonations of the Thompson ceased. The car jumped the lights and sped away toward the city.

Inside the Hawthorne Restaurant, waiters had run for the kitchen, customers had dropped to the floor or ducked behind their tables. As the noise died away, Capone rose to his feet and moved toward the double doors, his gun in his hand. Rio was a few paces behind him.

Farrell was sitting at the lunch counter over a pastrami sandwich and coffee: a well-knit, muscular man of medium height, with a sallow, oval face and dark brilliantined hair brushed flat on his head. He was wearing a cinnamon-coloured shantung suit with black-and-white oxfords, a black button-down shirt, and a white foulard necktie. A jagged, recently healed scar puckered his left cheek. As Rio followed his boss, Farrell called out sharply:

'Hey, Frank! Watch it, there: that was just a stall!'

The bodyguard swung around, scowling. The two men were poolroom acquaintances, no more. 'Whaddya mean – a stall?' he growled.

Alone among the customers, Farrell had remained seated when the fusillade sounded. 'They was firin' blanks,' he said calmly.

'Blanks? Are you kiddin'?'

'Sure. Blanks. You hear any windows break, any glass fall?'

'But what the hell – ?'

'They figure your boss'll mosey out as soon as the shootin' stops, to check out the damage,' Farrell said. 'Only that's when the real damage will start.'

'Jesus!' Rio turned and hurled himself at Capone, who was just reaching for the doors. He landed in a flying tackle on the mobster's broad shoulders, wrestled him to the floor, and sat astride his chest. 'It's a stall, boss, to get you outside,' he panted. 'You stay right there!'

Capone opened his mouth to reply, but his words were drowned in the stupefying clamour of Thompsons. A seven-car cavalcade had been following a block behind the decoy tourer. Knowing that the Hawthorne Hotel was Capone's suburban headquarters, the base from which he ran Cicero's 160 wide-open speakeasies and staffed the cathouses with the 5000 whores on his payroll, his North Side enemies had reckoned that the Big Guy and his team would be at home for sure on the first day of the fall turf meeting. They figured the blanks, as Farrell had guessed, would draw the hoods to windows and doors . . . and the gunners in the cavalcade would do the rest. Tourers, sedans, roadsters, all slowed to fifteen miles an hour as they entered the block, passing the hardware store, the radio

specialist's, the paint shop and the grocery only ten feet apart, holding their fire until the leading auto came abreast of the Anton Hotel. Then all hell broke loose.

Thirty seconds after the decoy had blasted off its blanks, machine-gunfire hosed up, down and across the Anton's façade. The steel hail ripped into the stores and shattered the plate-glass windows of the Hawthorne Restaurant, where the first car stopped. The others closed up behind it . . . and from five of them, the flaming, thundering Thompsons poured a stream of .45mm slugs into every door and window on the block. The sixth was halted opposite the entrance to the passageway leading between the stores to the lobby of the Hawthorne Hotel. Covered by sawed-off shotguns held by hoods in the seventh car, a man swung off the running board with a submachine-gun, ran across the sidewalk, and knelt down outside the doors. Coolly taking aim, he emptied a 100-shot drum down the corridor and into the lobby at the rapid-fire rate of 600 shells a minute. Then he returned to the car, a klaxon blared three times, and the cavalcade accelerated away toward the city with a grinding of gears and a roar of exhausts.

The attack lasted a fraction less than a quarter of a minute. Police estimated later that over a thousand shots were fired. Every pane of glass in the façades of the Anton Hotel, the Hawthorne Hotel, the restaurant, and the stores between them was shattered. The Thompson slugs, which will pierce ¼inch armour-plate and cut down a tree trunk with a circumference of 24 inches at a distance of 30 feet, drilled through doors, splintered panelling, and gouged holes in plaster-work. Mirrors smashed and bottles of lotion exploded in the barber's shop. Bullets tore through the clothes hanging behind the counter in the laundry and riddled thirty-five cars parked by the kerb.

Trapped in the Buick, Mrs Clyde Freeman screamed as a slug tore into her arm and flying glass from the erupting windshield embedded itself in her right eye. Her five-year-old son burst into tears and flung his arms around his father's neck: a third bullet had nicked the boy's knee and a fourth split the sleeve of his coat. Freeman himself lost his hat with a hole punched in the crown. At the same time, Louis Barko spun around and collapsed on the sidewalk outside the entrance of the Anton Hotel, with blood seeping between the fingers of the hand he had clapped to his left shoulder.

Astonishingly, nobody was killed. The sidewalk crowds who had scattered at the sound of gunfire from the decoy auto had been too scared to reappear before the real assault began.

In the Hawthorne Restaurant, customers cautiously pushed themselves up off the floor when the appalling stammer of the

machine-guns ceased. The air was acrid with cordite fumes. Liquor splashed to the floor from broken bottles behind the bar. There was glass everywhere and the clock had stopped at 1.16.

For a moment there was silence, and then suddenly the street was full of footsteps and voices. Capone got to his feet and crunched over fragments of crockery to the door. He stepped through the gaping hole where the glass panel had been and joined the excited crowd surveying the damage. Later, Farrell learned that he had diverted a proportion of his personal $100,000 a week rake-off from Cicero toward the cost of repairs – including a $10,000 cheque to the surgeons who saved the sight of Mrs Clyde Freeman's eye.

It was an open secret that the murder cavalcade had been led by Hymie Weiss, Vincent the Schemer Drucci, and Bugs Moran, the three gang bosses from Chicago's North Side who disputed Capone's stranglehold on the illicit liquor trade most fiercely. But when the police arrived, nobody had seen anything, not a single person had recognised anyone. The passers-by were too scared to talk, and such mobsters as had been around, even in the face of such a determined attempt at wholesale killing, observed the rigid gangland code of silence.

'Search me,' Capone said when he was interviewed by Chief of Detectives William Schoemaker. 'I was lyin' on my face under a table with Slippery Frank across my back. How could I have seen anythin'?'

'You were under that table *before* they opened up?'

Capone sighed. He mashed his forehead between the fingers and thumb of his right hand and pushed his fedora to the back of his head. 'They was tryin' to act smart,' he said. 'Ran a decoy auto through first, shootin' blanks. I guess they aimed to draw us out into the open, but Frank was wise to the gag an' we ducked.'

'How the hell did you know that?' Schoemaker asked Rio.

'Some guy at the lunch counter tipped me off,' the bodyguard replied.

'What guy? Is he there now?'

Rio looked across the glass-littered sidewalk, past the circle of gaping sightseers, and in through the splintered doorway of the restaurant. Farrell was still sitting at the lunch counter. 'Nah,' the torpedo growled. 'He musta scrammed when the lead started flyin'.'

'Who was he? You ever seen him before?'

Rio shrugged. 'How should I know? He was just a guy.'

'And of course *you* saw nothing of the raiders? You recognised no one?'

The bodyguard's weathered face cracked open in a grin. 'You said it, Chief! Like the boss said, I was on the floor!'

Schoemaker compressed his lips. 'I may want you two guys in for questioning,' he said to Capone. 'Don't leave town.'

Capone pulled down the front and one side of his hatbrim so that it shaded the scar on his face. 'You know me,' he said, 'always ready to assist the law.' He raised a hand and sauntered back into the restaurant.

Someone in the crowd sniggered. A voice murmured: 'Good old Al!' Schoemaker flushed a dark red and swung around. He thrust his way through the bystanders and strode past the shattered store-fronts to the hotel entrance. Lois Barko, his ferret face pale and drawn, sat on the sidewalk between two patrolmen. Hospital internes from an ambulance double-parked in the street had staunched the bleeding and fixed a temporary dressing to his injured shoulder. 'You!' Schoemaker shouted, jabbing an index finger at the wounded man. 'You were caught in the open, right where you sit. You weren't hidin' under no table, you musta seen something. Come on – who were they?'

Barko's face went paler still. 'N–no,' he stammered. 'I never saw nothin'. Honest I didn't. I wouldn't of recognised 'em if I'd seen. But I had my back to the street.'

'Oh yeah? So how come the slug took you in front and there ain't no exit wound?' the detective sneered. 'It bounced off one of them plate-glass windows maybe?'

Barko lowered his eyes and said nothing. Schoemaker stared at him, plucking at his lower lip with a finger and thumb. 'Just a minute,' he said slowly. 'I know that face. Isn't this the guy – ?' He turned around and raised his eyebrows at a plain clothes sergeant standing behind him. 'Didn't we . . . '

The sergeant nodded. 'Pulled him in outside the Standard Oil building a month ago.'

'That's right. This is one of the four hoods tried to bump off Hymie Weiss and Schemer Drucci on South Michigan. We pinched him running away after the shooting – but Drucci said he never saw him before.'

'Don't they all?' the sergeant said.

'You gave the name of Paul Valerie,' Schoemaker accused. 'And an address on Walnut Street that turned out to be phoney. This time I want the truth. What's your name, punk?'

'Barko,' the injured man whined. 'Louis Barko. I live right here at the Anton. But I ain't got nothin' to do with the mobs, and that's the truth. I'm just a smalltime gambler. You got me wrong, Chief. It was a case of – '

'Shuddup!' Schoemaker snapped. 'Sergeant – send out a call to pull in Drucci, Weiss and Moran. Take this bird down to the

station house and put those three up for an identity parade. If someone's memory don't start workin' pretty goddamn soon, there's gonna be a case of busted gut in town!'

'Captain,' one of the internes ventured, 'this man should be transported to hospital right away. That's a big slug in there, and it's lodged – '

'That's just too bad,' the detective interrupted roughly. 'But we're supposed to have a law to enforce in this town. Your patient can have all the medical aid he wants . . . just as soon as the sonofabitch decides to co-operate.' He turned and walked angrily back to the squad car.

Slippery Frank Rio left the crowd gathered around the group on the sidewalk and went back to the restaurant. 'Think Barko will sing?' he asked Capone.

'Not a chance,' the gang leader said. 'Not if he knows what's good for him. I don't want no flatfeet messin' with my affairs: we'll settle this one ourselves, nice an' easy.' He went up to the lunch counter and stood in front of Farrell. 'That was quick thinkin', fella,' he said. 'I'm obliged.'

'Be my guest,' Farrell said.

Capone scrutinised him through half-closed eyes. 'Where are you from, pal? What's your name?'

'Faroli. I'm from the East Coast, but my folks came from Palermo.'

'Yeah. I figured you had that wop look. Didn't I hear that name someplace before, though?'

Farrell smiled crookedly. 'There was a solo heist I pulled at the New York Diamond Exchange a while back. And a jail break that hit the headlines a few months ago.'

'Sure, sure. But I mean, like nearer home. The name rings a bell, pal. Who are you workin' with?'

'Right now,' Farrell said, 'I'm on my lonesome. I *was* with Sanguinetti.'

'That's it!' Capone exclaimed. 'The tough Easterner who roughed up Mullowney and tangled with the McGrath mob! Remember, Frank?'

Rio's face was as impassive as a block of granite. 'Sure,' he said, staring at Farrell through slitted eyes. Salvatore Sanguinetti had been a Sicilian allied to the Capone-Mafia syndicate. His gang, with the sole exception of Farrell, had been wiped out in a hijack attempt on a North-Siders' booze convoy run into Chicago by the McGrath mob with police protection.*

Capone shook his head. 'I never could figure out what had

* See *One Death In The Red*, by Ed Mazzaro, available from New English Library.

gotten into Sal, pulling a deal like that,' he said. 'We had a kinda truce operatin' with the O'Banions, and he had to go and louse it up by firin' on some crummy, two-truck shipment of bonded liquor from Canada! *With* an escort of cops! That was a real smart piece of business, I'm tellin' you: it got the organisation in bad with the law as well as with the North-Siders. Why the hell did he have to do it?'

Farrell shrugged. 'I just carried out the orders,' he said.

'Sure. I know.' Capone clapped him on the shoulder. 'What the hell – talkin' of Canada gives me an idea. I can always use a guy who thinks quick. How'd it suit you to do some work for me?'

Farrell flipped a cigarette into his mouth and struck a match. He looked up at the gang boss over his cupped hands. 'Suit me fine,' he said. 'What had you in mind?'

'Right now,' Capone said, 'the only thing I have in mind is to get out to that goddamn track. I have a horse runnin' in the third race. Tell you what, pal – drop by my downtown office this time tomorrow, and we'll talk it over. Room 409 at the Metropole; 2300 South Michigan.' He took a card from a crocodile billfold and handed it across.

Farrell shook out the match and tossed it through the splintered doorway. He dragged in a lungful of smoke. 'I'll be there,' he said.

'Swell.' Capone leaned over the counter and spoke to the barkeep, who was on his hands and knees sweeping up broken glass. 'Randy,' he said, 'we never did get to drink that cup of coffee. What the hell d'you have to do to get some service around this joint?'

Half an hour later, Bruno Farrell drove his rented Auburn roadster out of the parking lot beside the Hawthorne Restaurant and headed west. At Maywood, he turned right and took the highway for Harwood Heights. His pulses were racing and his firm, slightly cruel mouth was twisted into a smile. The encounter with Al Capone had proved to be the biggest slice of luck that had come his way in months.

For Farrell – or Faroli, as he was known in the underworld – was in fact a Federal prohibition agent working undercover, a man burdened with that most perilous of all missions: the order to infiltrate the enemy's ranks and spy on him from the inside.

'You look Italian,' his boss had said. 'You speak Italian. You could *be* Italian . . . and you know Sicily as well. If your clothes were a mite more jazzy you could almost pass for one of those Mafia characters. And that's exactly what I want you to do, Farrell. I want you to go to Chicago and get yourself

recruited by one of the Sicilian-American gangs controlled by Capone . . .'

They had given him a cast-iron cover story. He had been saddled with the unsolved Diamond Exchange robbery and sent to jail. He had made a sensational jail break and turned up in Chicago talking loud and acting tough. There was a shaky truce in operation between the Irish-Jewish confederation controlling the North Side illegal liquor trade, and Capone's *mafiosi* in the south. Farrell's first task had been to engineer a breakdown of this mobsters' cease-fire. For only if the gang wars broke out again and worsened could the Federal authorities overrule the corrupt city administration and step in to clean up the graft.

He had drawn attention to himself by getting into a fight over a night-club singer with a North Side mobster from the Teddy McGrath gang. He had pulled a bank robbery and had been hauled in by the cops. And finally he had been sprung by Sanguinetti and offered a place in the Sicilian's team. It was in fact Farrell himself who had tricked the gang boss into his ill-judged attack on the McGrath convoy – an operation which had, as he hoped, triggered off the renewed killings whose latest manifestation was the assault on Cicero that afternoon.

Since that failed hijack, he had been playing a waiting game, hanging around for an opening. Now . . . well, so far as openings went, they couldn't come any better than an invitation to work for the Big Guy himself!

But first he had to check back: he couldn't work without a briefing. Because almost the entire Chicago police force was on the payroll of one side or the other in the booze war, nobody could be trusted with the secret of Farrell's true identity. He worked entirely alone, his name appearing on no dossier, his work scheduled in no file; if he got into trouble with the law through his gangland connections, there was nobody to get him out. Only one man in the United States knew that Bruno Farrell the prohibition agent and Faroli the mobster were one and the same – and he worked out of the office of Emmerson Q. Johnson, the Federal Attorney General. At the end, Sanguinetti had known too: he had been tipped off by a smalltime gangster who had known Farrell as a Fed in Massachusetts. The gangster had been rubbed out in the convoy battle and Farrell, obeying orders to preserve his cover at all costs, had killed Sanguinetti. Now, already one death in the red in his personal war against organised crime, Farrell was asking for orders again . . .

Fifteen miles outside the city limits there was a pull-up for truckers that was off the usual route favoured by the beer

barons and their men. In the back of the cabin there was a pay phone that was reasonably soundproof. Farrell parked the Auburn, drank a cup of coffee, and went into the booth. 'Get me long distance,' he said when the operator answered. And then, giving the unlisted number that was burned in his mind, he added: 'I want a person to person call to a Mr George Stevens in Washington, DC.'

2 GEORGE STEVENS

Capone was living high. He was gambling as much as $100,000 on an afternoon at the track, and once, or so it was reported, he actually got a racetrack to lend him $500,000 when he was on a losing streak and had run out of money to bet. He had the cash sent around the next day. The Internal Revenue Service suspected that, at this point, Capone was worth about $20,000, including real estate, breweries, securities and stock. But very little of it, on the advice of his lawyers, was in Capone's name. However, while he covered up his assets, he didn't cover up his spending, and that's what got him in the end . . . The Feds also suspected that Capone owned or controlled several banks through which he moved his funds.

DON MACLEAN, *Pictorial History of the Mafia*

George Stevens was an administration lawyer, a grey man so anonymous in looks that his friends often passed him in the street without recognising him. His voice was unemphatic, his features unremarkable, his clothes as unfashionable as his conservative opinions. Yet on one subject he burned with a fanatic zeal that was almost revolutionary in its ardour – the application of the law. He was not concerned with the rightness or wrongness, the validity or relevance of the law, but only with its administration as an absolute. His passionate determination that Prohibition should be enforced arose therefore not from any conviction that drinking was wrong, not from a belief that alcohol was a menace to the American Way of Life, nor even through a distaste for the crime that it bred, but because the 18th Amendment to the American Constitution, which made the Volstead Act – and therefore Prohibition – law, had been passed by Congress in 1917.

He sat, that sunny September afternoon, looking out of the window of his large, sparsely furnished office, at the pigeons on the treeshaded lawns around the Capitol – a man who idolised the law as an abstract, but whose methods of enforcing it were

practical and concrete. In this sole respect he was a rugged individualist, unafraid to cut corners and go out on a limb provided the end product satisfied his criteria of justice.

The phone on his desk rang. 'Oh, Mr Stevens,' his secretary said, 'there's a long distance call from Illinois. Person to person, from a Mr Faroli. He wants to make the call collect. Will you accept the charges?'

'Sure,' Mr Stevens said. 'Put him on right away.' He hesitated a moment, and then added: 'Try out the new machine while we're talking.'

'Very well, sir.'

The new machine had been installed that morning by an FBI engineer. It was a complicated electrical apparatus sprawling over half the outer office whereby telephone conversations could be recorded and transcribed on a phonograph disc. Stevens thought it might be a useful way of preserving discussions he considered too sensitive to be taken down by a stenographer.

A shirt-sleeved expert brought in the disc and laid it on the desk soon after Farrell had rung off. It lay shining blackly in a sunbeam – a dossier in a circle of shellac.

There was no dossier on Bruno Faroli, mobster of Sicilian extraction, who was working undercover for an unnamed department in Washington acting on orders from the Attorney General's office and the Treasury Department. But – although no connection between the two men was mentioned – there was a file on Bruno Farrell, Federal Prohibition Officer, of Massachusetts. Stevens rose from his desk, unlocked a grey filing cabinet, removed a folder of the same colour, and took the single sheet of typescript it contained over to the window. The life story it encapsulated was a resumé of five days' intensive investigation and screening by the FBI – and its subject had been chosen for the dangerous undercover assignment over twenty-four others on Stevens's short list because of two notes added at the end. The first was part of the manuscript. It read: 'Perhaps because of Italian blood on the father's side (the name was originally Faroli), Farrell has Latin-type features. Speaks fluent idiomatic Italian and could easily be taken for native of Palermo or Naples.'

The second had been scrawled in the handwriting of a high official of the FBI: 'George, this guy is a tough egg and something of a law unto himself. But he knows how to take orders . . . and how to give them! Best of all, from your point of view, he is, so far as we can find out, dead straight.'

Well, Stevens's hunch, putting in an Italian-speaking agent who looked a little like the movie actor Ramon Novarro, had

certainly paid off. And if results were anything to go by, the FBI man's faith had been justified: Farrell had gotten himself recruited, he *had* engineered a breakdown in the gangland truce, and he had proved himself not only straight but smart, for he had achieved all this without his cover being blown! But the renewal of mob killings was only the beginning. If it escalated the way Stevens hoped, it would give the Federal authorities the excuse they needed to step in and override the bribed and corrupt Chicago city administration. That way, the law could once again be enforced and respected. Yet there would remain the problem of putting those who had made it a mockery behind bars. And this was where Farrell could be of greater use still. Stevens glanced over the man's file again.

> BRUNO FARRELL – Born 1891 Denver, Colorado, of third generation American parents. Father consultant ophthalmologist at Denver General; mother (née Lilian Hirschfeld) ward sister before marriage. Both dead. Left local high school before graduation to work passage to Europe on US freighter sailing from Galveston, Texas. Subsequently (1910-14) soldier of fortune living on sail-boat between Italy and Sicily. Suspected smuggler and gunrunner but no convictions. At outbreak of hostilities 1914 travelled to London and volunteered services to British Expeditionary Force. Awarded Military Medal Ypres. Later commissioned as pilot in Royal Flying Corps with many combat missions over Western Front. Transferred to US Army in 1917 and seconded to Intelligence because of intimate knowledge Italy and Italians. Distinguished himself Caporetto. Since Armistice, like many veteran ex-officers without special qualifications, has worked for US government . . .

The dossier added that Farrell had been known to refuse bribes from criminals subsequently convicted on his testimony, that his interests were sailboats, flying and automobiles, and that his pay as a Prohibition agent was $85 a week. Pinned to the sheet was a carbon of the official order explaining his absence from Massachusetts. This stated that he was temporarily transferred to Washington for a special course on Prohibition enforcement, and during this time his pay would be increased to $125.

He was having to work hard for the raise, Stevens thought grimly to himself, even though he was living on expenses and his salary was banked. The lawyer picked the record off his desk and took it over to a victrola standing on a table beside the door. He cranked the machine, lowered the disc on to the spindle, set the turntable revolving, and placed the needle

carefully on the run-in groove. The recording apparatus had been switched on after Farrell had reported the offer he had received from Capone. The first voice audible over the surface hiss crackling from the speaker horn was Stevens's own:

'That's great! Just great! Couldn't have come at a better time. It may be just the opening we need.'

'You want I should take it? Whatever he offers?' Farrell's light tenor sounded dubious. *'Suppose it's a bodyguard job, like a hired killer?'*

'Take it, whatever it is. Hold off the mortalities if you can – but remember the end justifies the means . . . and the end in this case is the proper administration of the law.' A tinge of warmth suffused Stevens's voice as he threw a leg over his favourite, and only, hobby horse.

'Okay, will do. What's the pitch?'

'Again, it's a question of the law. There have been more than 300 gang killings in Chicago since 1920. You know how many of the murderers have been brought to trial?'

'Sure. Around half a dozen.'

'Right. And of those, only one was convicted. They couldn't buy their way out of that: he actually shot the guy in court. No bigtime mobster has ever been sent up the river in Chicago since the Volstead Act was passed, Farrell. Juries are scared to convict, or they buy witnesses, or bribe the police, or intimidate judges. There seems to be no way we can get them.' The needle scratched in the groove as Stevens's voice ceased. Farrell said: *'I'm listening.'*

'All right,' the lawyer resumed, *'if we can't pin the things they do on them, we'll have to make use of the things they don't do.'*

'Come again?'

'Like tax evasion. Right now the IRS is working on a scheme to nail the big shots with that. Take Capone now – he's reckoned to draw an annual $35,000,000 personal profit out of his rackets. And he never filed a tax return in his life!'

Farrell's whistle of astonishment screeched in the speaker. *'That should be a piece of cake for the Justice Department then,'* he said.

'Uh-uh. Smart mouthpieces have always pleaded the Fifth Amendment. They say that to declare an income that's illegal is tantamount to incriminating yourself . . . so up to now they've refused to do it, and they've gotten away with it. But . . . ' Once more the record hissed as Stevens paused for effect. Then he added impressively: *'But there's a case coming up before the Supreme Court in a few weeks. They're going to be asked to rule that taxes must be paid on all earnings, even*

if they do happen to be illegal. If they find for the government – and I think they will – then we can get these hoods on Federal evasion offences. But we'll need evidence . . . and in Capone's case that's just what we don't have.'

'And you want me – ?' Farrell's voice creased as the needle ground into the play-off spiral. Stevens swore. He lifted the playing head, turned the record over, and restarted the machine.

' . . . difficulty is to find written proof that he receives this money,' he heard his own voice saying slowly. *'All the transactions are covered up in a tangle of holding companies and front men and aliases. We know he gets this enormous rake-off – but we've got to have evidence that will stand up in a court of law. Jake Guzik, the hatchet man who fixes the Syndicate's accounts, is a real smart operator. But there must be documentary evidence somewhere: it's too big an operation to be run without books, for God's sakes!'*

A sigh was audible over the noise of the needle on the disc. *'That's all I have to do, huh?'* Farrell said. *'Find my way into their secret auditors' bureau and steal the incriminating documents?'*

'Not steal. That would tip them off – and they mustn't know the line we're taking. No – you locate the documents, decide which would be the most valuable to a prosecutor on a tax evasion rap, and then you photograph them. That's all.'

'Swell. How do you suggest I – uh – locate these papers?'

'I leave the details to you,' Stevens said grandly. *'It might have presented some difficulties – but now that you're being recruited by Capone himself . . . '*

Farrell laughed. *'Now it's easy?'*

'I'm sure you'll find some way,' Stevens said comfortingly, *'once you're on the inside.'*

'Supposing I do. What exactly are you looking for?'

'It's difficult to be precise when I don't know what there is to find. In general, I want documentary evidence linking Capone financially with any of his illegal activities – bootlegging, speakeasies, prostitution, the numbers game, gambling. Anything showing that Alphonse Capone, alias Al Brown, has received monies from those activities will send the Treasury boys wild. Bank statements on their own won't be enough: you'll have to tie them in some way with bookkeeping entries, to make it stick. Okay?'

'Okay,' Farrell echoed. *'And if there's evidence that he paid out for illegal activities – hired killers, bribes, that kind of thing?'*

'Better still!' the lawyer enthused. *'But you'll be lucky if – '*

'Your three minutes are up,' the operator's voice interrupted. *'Do you want another three minutes, Washington?'*

'No, no,' Stevens said hastily. *'Call me again when you have news, huh?'*

'I'll be in touch,' Farrell said. He hung up.

Stevens stopped the machine and went back to the filing cabinet. The file on Farrell was slim, but there was a much bulkier one on the operation with which he was involved. In it he appeared simply as 'Operative A'. There was no cross-reference to this pseudonym in any other file. Stevens took out the fat folder and dumped its contents on his desk. The affair had started with a bundle of police reports, newspaper clippings and petitions from outraged citizens underlining the total breakdown of law and order in Chicago, and the impossibility of punishing those responsible for it. Legal summaries and depositions had been added, together with a statistician's digest of all the facts, and these had been considered by the US Attorney General's office, the Treasury Department, and finally the White House. The whole dossier had then been handed over to Stevens with a handwritten presidential memorandum ordering simply: *Handle this any way you want – but handle it good!*

The next entries in the file were Stevens's own notes on the original interview with 'Operative A' and his subsequent briefings. There followed more newspaper stories charting Farrell's jail break and his exploits in Chicago under the name of Faroli; lists of funds disbursed with the operative's expense account – which had to be submitted by mail each month; and the minutes of meetings between Emmerson Q. Johnson and Stevens. The final items were a bundle of clippings reporting the fresh outbreak of gang warfare after Sanguinetti's hijack attempt, and a series of notes on the various telephone calls Farrell had made to the office.

Stevens took a sheet of paper from a drawer and unclipped a pen from his vest pocket. He listened to the record of his conversation once more and made a précis of the main points in his neat, careful handwriting. Then he dated the sheet, gave it a serial number, and added it to the file. Finally he replaced the folder in the cabinet, slid shut the drawer, and locked it with a key hanging from his watch-chain.

He removed the record from the turntable, closed the lid of the victrola, and stood for a moment looking at the shellac disc. Abruptly he broke it sharply across his knee, snapped each of the halves in two again and threw the pieces into his wastepaper-basket. He looked at his watch. It was almost five o'clock.

He sat down at his desk and unhooked the receiver of the

telephone. His thin lips were stretched in a self-satisfied smile. 'Miss Anderson,' he said when his secretary answered, 'I'll make one more call before I go home. Get me the President's office at the White House.'

3 BRUNO FARRELL

'It was garrisoned like Birger's blockhouse in the woods in Bloody Williamson county. The Capones occupied as many as fifty rooms on two heavily guarded floors. They operated their own private elevators and maintained their own service bars. Gambling went on openly and women visited the floors at all hours of the day and night. In an underground vault, specially constructed, were stored $150,000 worth of wines and liqueurs for the gang's private use. The hallways were patrolled by sentinels, posted at regular intervals as in an army, equipped with the latest type of firearms. On Sunday mornings, the lobby was a beehive of activity. Prominent criminal lawyers and high officials of the police department, along with politicians and dive-keepers, waited their turn to consult with the Big Shot. Policemen in uniform streamed in and out. A blind pig [disguised speakeasy], *operated in the lobby by a semi-public official, did a land office business.'*

Description of the Metropole Hotel, Chicago, in Al Capone's heyday, by an anonymous guest

The weather had changed. A cool wind blew off the lake, threshing the planes in Grant Park, carrying a fine rain that misted the grimed glass hooped over the Central Station. Farrell drove down to the Loop, parked the Auburn in the crescent behind the Congress Hotel, and walked the few hundred yards to 2300 South Michigan. Yellow leaves were drifting from the lakeshore trees, and the sidewalk crowds turned up their collars and bent their heads against the drizzle. There was a traffic jam on the avenue: as far as he could see, north and south, the broad, shining roadway was choked with honking automobiles, cabs, trucks, and street-cars. By the time he got to the Metropole, the shoulders of his wrap-over trenchcoat were dark with moisture.

The vestibule smelled of wet cloth and cigar smoke. It was as crowded as a Friday night commuters' train – although the

proportion of thickset men with blue chins was higher – and it took Farrell some time to locate the correct reception clerk. Finally he was taken in tow by a pasty-faced youth with cavernous eyes and slicked-back hair, who led him along a corridor threadbare with the passage of countless feet to an elevator guarded by two unmistakable hoods. 'It's okay,' the youth said laconically. 'Boss is expectin' him. Name of Faroli.'

The taller of the torpedoes nodded. They were both bulky, swarthy, balding, with conspicuous bulges thrusting out the left-hand lapels of their wide-shouldered blue suits. He pressed a buzzer set into the wall and then opened the elevator doors. 'Inside, buddy.'

The doors closed. 'Raise the hands,' the shorter hood said. Farrell complied, feeling the practised fingers pat all over and then dip inside his jacket to twitch the Mauser automatic from its shoulder holster. The hood nodded and pursed thick lips. 'Nice iron. Kinda heavy for quick work, though.'

'War souvenir,' Farrell said briefly.

'You get it back on the way out. Okay Luigi – he's clean now.'

The taller man nodded in his turn and thumbed the button labelled 4.

The fourth-floor hallway was more thickly carpeted than the lobby. There was the same air of shabbiness and use – grease marks on the cream walls, cigarette burns on the floor – but the odour of stale cigar smoke was heavier, the atmosphere more oppressive. Steam heat creaked in the radiators and there was a brass cuspidor standing by the elevator doors. Beside it was a fleshy giant cradling a Thompson submachine-gun. 'This way, Mac,' he said, jerking his head for Farrell to precede him. The doors closed and the two guards sank from sight.

Farrell walked down the corridor ahead of the torpedo. At each corner a man was stationed with a sawn-off shotgun. Behind the door of room 402, a girl laughed shrilly. Farther along, 405 was open, and he could see two shirt-sleeved men in fedoras playing pool at a full-sized table under a green-shaded light. A stronger smell was drowning the cigar smoke now – the rich, garlic-flavoured aroma of Italian food; cannelloni and lasagne, ossa buco and fritto misto, parmesan cheese and herbs and chianti, spiced with the roasted fragrance of coffee. 'Am I too late for lunch?' Farrell asked.

'No talkin',' the hood said.

Farrell came to a halt. Outside room 407, the passageway was blocked off by a steel shutter. The guard rapped on it with his knuckles – two long and three short. The shutter slid into a recess in the wall, revealing a man with an automatic in his

hand. 'Faroli,' the guard said. 'For the boss.'

The new guide led the way to 409, pushed open the door, and said curtly: 'In there.' Farrell went in.

Half a dozen members of Capone's eighteen-man personal bodyguard lounged in the room reading the racing papers. Most of them wore hats. None looked up as he entered. In here it was brilliantine, sweat and whisky – there were two bottles half full on the table – that warred with the fog of cigarette smoke seizing the throat. Steel blinds were drawn over the windows. Farrell took off his own hat, unfastened his damp raincoat and sat on a chair by the door.

There was another door communicating with Room 409, and from behind it came the rumble of voices. After about ten minutes this door opened and a heavily built man wearing a melton topcoat with a fur collar came out. His blue mohair suit was beautifully pressed, his silver hair, crimped neatly around his skull, was immaculate, and his pink orange-peel complexion witnessed the daily application of hot towels and massage. A diamond stickpin winked from his silk tie.

Farrell's eyes widened. Terence O'Mara, Captain of the Hanson Street precinct, a crooked cop with whom he had tangled in the past!

O'Mara fanned the layers of blue smoke away from his face with a broad-brimmed hat protected by a waterproof cover. 'Jesus,' he complained in a thick County Cork accent, 'you boys sure keep the wraps on! A person could cut the atmosphere with a knife – if he packed anything that old fashioned!'

One of the heavy-jowled men in the room looked up from his paper, but nobody replied. The policeman's gaze fell on Farrell. His pale eyebrows drew together in a scowl. 'What the hell are you doing here?' he growled.

'Same as you, I guess,' Farrell said easily. 'Lookin' for a little more dough. I want to add another stickpin to my collection.'

One of the hoods coughed. O'Mara flushed a deeper pink and strode from the room. Five minutes later, Slippery Frank Rio appeared in the communicating doorway and beckoned Farrell into the inner sanctum.

The sky was grey and there were raindrops sliding down the window-panes, but after the claustrophobic squalor of the anteroom, the big shot's office seemed to generate a blaze of light and colour. Polished mahogany chairs stood on a red and blue Turkey carpet; bottles and glasses gleamed on a richly inlaid oriental sideboard; the rain-wet façades of the tall buildings on the far side of the avenue were framed in heavy crimson drapes.

Capone sat behind an immense teak-wood desk, reading the financial section of the *Chicago Tribune*. A Corona-Corona was clamped between his fleshy lips, and the inevitable black-ribboned, silver grey hat was pulled low down over the scarred side of his face. Farrell had heard that he was sensitive about his premature baldness.

Rio closed the door and leaned his back against it. Capone looked up. 'That stock market!' he said. 'Can you imagine anyone dumb enough to place his dough with those sharks? It's nothing but a racket!' He crumpled up the newspaper and dropped it to the floor. 'Siddown, Faroli. I got a proposition for you.'

Farrell took a chair in front of the desk and studied the man whose crime empire he was briefed to destroy. Outwardly, there was little to distinguish the big boss from the hired killers surrounding him: they shared similar blue-jowled faces, thick features and heavy brows; they had the same bulky bodies that could nevertheless erupt into violence with cat-like and deadly speed; there was a common coarseness of expression. But while the torpedoes' talents extended only in one direction – they were soulless machines programmed for killing and intimidation: period – Capone's, paradoxically, were multiple. He had the ruthlessness and callous disregard for suffering bred in the Brooklyn slums where he was born, but he still retained his Italian peasant sense of family: his home was a modest two-storey suburban house on Prairie Avenue, in the Grand Crossing district of the South Side, where he lived with his wife Mae, an eleven-year-old son, his widowed mother, a sister and two brothers. He could pick up the telephone and order the killing of a rival as coolly as a financier unloading worthless stock, yet he gave generously to charity, liked to cook on his evenings at home, and was a regular patron of the opera. Every time he went to a boxing match, he bought $100 worth of extra tickets, which he gave away to poor kids hanging around the outside of the stadium. He was a violent man, a killer and a blackmailer, yet each Christmas he sent a car full of turkeys, fruit, candy and gifts for every pupil and teacher of the local school his young sister attended. Barred from the Sicilian Mafia because of his Neapolitan background, he had the business acumen to enlist the *mafiosi* on his side in his pioneer attempt to organise crime on a business footing. Above all a hustler, he had graduated from speakeasy bouncer to king of the Chicago underworld in just over five years – and he was still only thirty-eight, ten years older than the average gangster's death age.

None of this showed in the simian features across the desk

from Bruno Farrell: it showed in the size of the desk, and in the contrast between the office and the anteroom, between the boss and the hoods outside.

'Working for Sal,' Capone said, 'you must know something about the liquor trade, I guess?'

Farrell smiled. 'Some.'

'It's a tough business. The competition is rough. It seems some guys don't know when they've had enough.' Capone sighed. 'Know how many speaks there are in this city? More'n ten thousand, pal. Every one of those joints buys half a dozen barrels of beer a week, at sixty dollars the barrel, and a coupla cases of liquor at ninety dollars the case. That's damned near five and a half million bucks every week!'

Farrell waited. He knew the figures as well as Capone. It was his business to.

'You'd think,' the gang leader went on, 'knowin' it only costs us four bucks a barrel to make the beer and twenty bucks for a case of liquor, you'd think there'd be enough in it for everybody. But no, not on your sweet life! Every goddamn day there's some smart-ass punk tryin' to horn in on the trade! Or some guy his head's gotten too big, he wants to muscle in on my territory. Whaddya think of that?'

'I'd think it was like to be unhealthy,' Farrell said.

'Damn right it's unhealthy. Sure, I got the means to knock off any motherfuckin' North-Siders who try to louse up my business – and I'll use 'em, as Weiss and Moran will find out.' Capone mashed the stub of his cigar savagely into an ashtray. 'But I got better things to do. We got six breweries licensed to make near-beer. That's legal. But that beer has to be spiked and delivered to the speaks – and that ain't. I got several thousand alky-cookin' stills producin' moonshine in tenement backyards all over the city. That liquor has to be collected, cut, flavoured, coloured, and bottled as Scotch, or whatever, before it can be delivered. The moustache Petes who run the stills have to be paid. The cops have to be squared. The politicians have to be fixed. That takes organisation, boy, I'm tellin' you.'

Farrell wondered where the conversation was leading. So far, he felt like a reporter being granted an interview. He said: 'I can see that. You need outside interference like you need a hole in the head.'

'Right. That I can do without. I pay the law, and I pay them plenty, to look the other way. But some vote-catchin' City Hall creep can start leanin' on them any day, and then my ass'd be in a sling.'

Capone fished another cigar from his vest pocket, unwrapped it, and clenched it between his large teeth. Frank Rio came

forward, clipped the end, and struck a match. Farrell waited until the gang boss had the cigar nicely drawing, and then ventured:

'You were sayin', Mr Capone, that maybe I could help out?'

'Yeah,' Capone blew out a lungful of smoke. 'Like I say, I can handle hijacking and suchlike here in the city. I got the muscle to do it. But muscle comes dime a dozen in Chicago – and there's another side to the business where I got problems that need a guy he should use his loaf.' He took the cigar from his mouth, batted smoke away from his face, and inspected the glowing end. 'You think fast, Faroli,' he said. 'You showed that yesterday. Maybe you're the guy I want.'

'Tell me about it,' Farrell said.

'This bootleg hooch that we cook up here in the city – it's good enough for the speaks and the jazz dives, the gamblin' joints and the cat houses. But there's always a steady demand for the real thing. Them socialites on Lake Shore Drive, the big business operators on the Gold Coast, country-club whizz-kids who talk big about the bottle in the locker-room – they don't want no bathtub gin or chemical bourbon. They want genuine bonded liquor, the way it says on the label – and they get it. You know where it comes from?'

Farrell nodded. 'You run it in from outside.'

'Right. We land it on the Florida keys from Cuba. We ship it from Rum Alley on the New York waterfront. Some even comes overland from Mexico. But most of it we get from Canada – either in boats across the Great Lakes or the long way round in trucks.'

Capone leaned back in his chair and placed his fat hands palm downwards on the desk. His head was wreathed in cigar smoke. 'That's my problem. The distance. I got the men to stall off hijacks in Chicago and the State of Illinois. But I can't patrol the lakes and the goddamn highways coast to coast, so the stuff comin' in that way's what they call vulnerable. We got an understanding with the Purple Gang in Detroit: they look after some of the booze on its way from Canada. But not all. And lately we've lost so much that it's got me worried. There's a lotta dough tied up even in one truckload of bonded liquor. Also it gets us in bad with the folks who've been promised delivery.'

'And you want me?' Farrell began.

'I want you to use your loaf. Work out some scheme for runnin' liquor in from Canada where it won't risk bein' ambushed and hijacked at every turn in the road. If you can do it, we're in business.'

Farrell thought. His dark brows knitted in concentration. In

the sudden quiet, a gust of wind stammered the window frame, flinging a scatter of raindrops against the glass. Four floors below, traffic honked impatiently in the street.

'Think about it,' Capone said. 'If you come up with something, contact me again, huh?' He pushed his chair back from the desk.

'I don't need to think about it,' Farrell said. 'I got an idea – and I figure it should do the trick.'

'Already?' The heavy brows raised. 'Let's hear it.'

'The way I see it, the only way you can stop your trucks being ambushed and your boats boarded is . . . not to use trucks and boats.'

Capone scowled. 'Are you tryin' to be funny?' Frank Rio pushed himself upright off the door and advanced a pace into the room.

Farrell shook his head. 'Serious. I'm suggesting we run the stuff in by airplane.'

'By *airplane*?' The gang boss sounded incredulous.

'Why not? There's plenty of converted bombing ships still around from the war. You could stash a truckload of booze in one of those – and once she's in the air, no hijacker's to know what route she's takin'.'

Capone hitched his chair up to the desk again. He stroked his heavy jaw with fingers and thumb. 'Maybe you got something there,' he said slowly. 'You could fix that? You know about airplanes?'

'Sure. I was a combat flyer in the war myself.'

The thick fingers with their bitten nails caressed the scar, slid beneath an ear, sidled around to the nape of the neck. Capone scratched his head, tipping his hat still farther over his eyes. 'It's an idea,' he said.

'It's a surefire idea: you got all the advantages and none of the problems,' Farrell urged. 'It'd be quicker, safer, secret . . . and certain.'

'And it'd cost more dough.'

'Sure it would cost more. But against that, you'd *know* the stuff would arrive. You could count on it, you'd be – '

'How much more?'

'I couldn't say off the bat: I don't know how much it costs to run a convoy.'

'Plenty,' Capone said feelingly. 'Most of the guys are on a grand a week. There's three men with each truck, a flivver scouting ahead, and four guns ridin' shotgun in a sedan. Then there's the flatfeet to be fixed, a police escort to be paid for through certain areas, contacts to be covered. Plenty.'

'Plus the cost of the trucks you lose and the hijacked merchandise.'

Capone nodded. 'Plus that.' He jetted smoke through his nostrils and tipped the ash from his cigar into the saucer of a coffee cup on the desk.

'The way I see it,' Farrell said, 'you'd save the cost of the trucks; there'd be no protection to pay; if the guys are on the payroll anyway, they'd be released to help look after your convoys here in the city; all you'd need would be a coupla mechanics at each end of the trip, and guards on the two fields. But those you have anyway. Against that, your gasoline would come higher – and there's the cost of the ship.'

'Yeah. How much would that come out? How many'd we need?'

'Just one. You could do two, three trips a day if you wanted. Anyway, a whole fleet would draw too much attention to the operation. As to the cost, I'd say lay off a new one. Too many formalities; too long to wait for delivery; again, too much attention. Like I say, there's old warplanes around. I guess you could pick one up for ten grand, maybe a little more.'

'No shit! That's chickenfeed!' Capone laughed throatily. 'The idea kinda tickles me – bumming around a used airplane lot! You could handle that? Fix the machine up to handle freight?'

'No problem. Air transport's the coming thing, believe me,' Farrell said. 'You could get in on the ground floor. The cost of that ship would be amortised in half a dozen flights.'

'Sure. But ain't there some kind of regulations? Don't the Federal authorities have a say-so on who flies where?'

'Certainly. But they ain't in a position to enforce them. They don't need to. Not yet. Later, when there's commercial airlines flyin' into every major city coast to coast, when folks'll have a plane like they have an auto today – then there'll be regulations! You won't be able to take off without you file a flight plan telling where you're going, at what speed, what height you'll be, and I don't know what else. But today it's still wide open: ain't enough planes in the air for the busybodies to pay them no mind.'

Capone picked up a paper-knife and tested the point on his thumb. Evidently the thought of being a trail-blazer intrigued him. The boldness and originality of the plan appealed to his sense of the theatrical. Yet he had still to be convinced that it was a practical possibility. 'You say we'd need to guard the field at each end of the trip,' he said finally. 'What field? You can't run a plane into a back-street warehouse like a truck . . . and I wouldn't care to land a cargo of liquor at the municipal

airport – if they even got the place levelled out yet!'

'You don't need no municipal airport,' Farrell said. 'You don't need no poolroom table neither: all you need is a half mile of open grassland that's fairly flat. Some of the fields we used in France was just plain pastureland requisitioned from the farmers. Don't you have a place out in the country?'

'Sure I do. There's an old colonial mansion I picked up in the Argonne forest, near Howell, in the south-west corner of Cook County. It's kinda run down, but I send some of the boys out there from time to time when they need a rest cure.'

'Perfect. I take it there's parkland around the house?'

'Oh, sure. Plenty. But folks are goin' to take notice if planes keep landin' out there. They – '

'Not if I fly by night,' Farrell interrupted. 'All I'd need is a double line of flares burnin' for fifteen minutes around my arrival time. And floods switched on when I actually touch down. If the place is surrounded by forest, who's gonna notice that after midnight? As for the sound of the motors – could you locate exactly where a ship is in the dark? Even if it was loud?'

Capone came suddenly to a decision. 'All right, Faroli,' he said briskly. 'You're on. Now here's what we'll do . . . '

Farrell's mind raced. If Capone had wanted to employ him as a strongarm man, he wouldn't have had a hope in hell of getting near the organisation's records or secretariat – not with that crowd of torpedoes constantly around the boss. He wouldn't even have been able to find out where such documents might be without arousing suspicion. But if he could fix it so that he handled the deal he had thought up on the spur of the moment as some kind of loner – as a sub-contractor, almost – maybe Stevens's impossible task might turn out to be a possibility after all. But he would have to play the cards close to his chest. He figured the best line to take would be a strong one.

'. . . two thousand a week,' Capone was saying, 'and expenses. Plus you get five per cent of the profit on each consignment delivered on time. How does that grab you?'

'That's okay.' Farrell allowed a dubious note to creep into his voice. 'But I'm kinda used to working as a loner, Mr Capone. You know? I'd only accept the assignment on one condition . . . ' He broke off in mid-sentence. Rio had leaped forward and seized his shoulder in an iron grip.

'Watch your grab, loudmouth!' the bodyguard snarled. 'Who the hell d'you think you're talkin' to? No cheapskate punk's gonna lay down conditions to the boss!' His free hand was raised threateningly.

Capone chuckled. He seemed to be genuinely amused. 'Let him be, Frank,' he said. 'I like a guy he should have spunk.'

'Me, I don't like guys they should be fresh,' Rio growled. But he released Farrell and moved sullenly back to the door.

'So what are your conditions for doin' me the favour of lettin' me employ you?' Capone asked genially.

Farrell rubbed his shoulder. 'I'm not tryin' to act bigtime,' he said, 'but this operation has to be slick, it has to be timed to the second if we ain't gonna blow the whole deal, and it has to be tight.'

'So?'

'So I'd only be interested – I couldn't guarantee you success any other way – if I could pick my own mob, if I have sole charge of them during each trip, and if I account directly to your own office.'

'That's Jake Guzik, across the street,' Capone said. He drew on his cigar and stared at Farrell through the smoke. 'Sounds reasonable,' he said at length. 'What'd your first move be?'

'Check out that country property of yours; see if it's suitable for a landin' strip; fix more space if it ain't. Then I'd go up to Canada and look for a ship. She'd be cheaper there – and easier to come by. After that, it's just a question of locating a field up there . . . and hirin' the boys. Like I say, you'd have to leave that to me: I know what I want in the way of mechanics, and I know the kind of muscle I need.'

'You'd fly the plane yourself?'

'Sure. With one guy I could trust as co-pilot and navigator.'

'Yeah,' Capone said. 'Guys that you can trust. That's important. I don't know you, but I back my hunches. Act square with me, and I'll act square with you. But I don't like bein' crossed – remember that.' The heavy brows came down, the agate eyes gazed piercingly at Farrell. And then the gang boss rose abruptly to his feet and held out his hand.

'All right, Faroli,' he said. 'We'll give it a whirl.'

4 JASON METTNER

Louis Barko never split to the law on Weiss and Drucci and Moran. But ole Scarface evened the account all right. The day after those hoods tore the inn apart in Cicero, one of Capone's men rented a room in an apartment house overlooking Weiss's North Side flower shop. At the same time some broad rented a room covering the back entrance. Neither of them was ever identified. From that moment on, Hymie was walking dead. Three out-of-town hit men with Thompsons stationed themselves at each of those windows – and waited. They waited a week, maybe until the sidewalk was clear of ordinary citizens. Weiss came and went a hundred times. He never knew about the ukuleles up above, waiting to play his funeral march. They got him on October 11th – twelve slugs in his body, his minder dead, and three other guys wounded. The only evidence the police could find was the guns, a ring of cigarette stubs around them and three chairs. The big laugh was that Weiss had taken the florist's over from his old boss, Dion O'Banion, when Dion was put on the spot there two years before by Scalise, Anselmi and Mike Genna. That was another Capone success.

I saw him in a hick town west of Sudbury, just over the Canadian border on the edge of Lake Huron. The city editor had sent me up to cover some crummy air meet, things being unusually quiet on the crime desk that week. Not that *The Globe* would normally waste a half-inch filler below the fold on page twenty-seven for a story on an air meet in Canada, but in this case there were extenuating circumstances. A or One, the proprietor was riding that month's hobby-horse: the one about aviation being the thing of the future. He was late to start in the race, but what the hell: he was going to ride 'im, cowboy! B or Two, the apes running this show happened to be English, and the proprietor – maybe because McCormick was running a strong anti-British line in the *Tribune* to deflect attention from the graft in Chicago – the proprietor was also

on a limey kick that month. For extra snob value, there was a title involved.

So there was the Windy City's ace crime reporter, armed with notebook and pencil, all set to turn in a colour piece for Sunday's magazine section, byline Jason Mettner, Our Special Correspondent in Joinville Falls, Ontario.

There was plenty of colour all right, and all of it was grey. It had been raining for a week, and the lake was grey, the sky was grey, the asphalt of the wet parking lot shone grey where the local population had stayed away in thousands. They should have come, at that: they'd have been able to hear the selection of tasteful evergreens played by the band below the announcer's box not twice, as usual, but three times – once coming out of the instruments, a second time through the amplifiers around the field, and a third time echoing off the rows of empty seats in the grandstand.

Oh, sure, there was a grandstand. Right in front of the clapboard clubhouse, beneath the control tower with the banner saying *Joinville Flying Club*, between the two canvas ex-government hangars. It had been run up out of steel scaffolding tubes and raw planking, and it didn't look strong enough to hold more than the hundred people huddled on it against the drizzle gusting in from the lake. Maybe the Ontarians were right not to share *The Globe*'s enthusiasm for the valiant English baronet and his circus. Yes – that's what they were billed as: Sir Lyn Duffield and His Daredevil Aeronautical Circus. A Thrill A Minute On The Highway Of The Future.

Except for the noble boss, it was the usual barnstormers' routine. Aerobatics. Delayed parachute drops. Sky writing. Formation flying and wing walking. It was getting to be quite a popular entertainment. Except, it seemed, in Joinville Falls, Ontario.

Duffield was peddling two specialities. Among his stable were two single-seat racers with 375 cubic inch motors – spiky supercharged monoplanes that looked like oversized mosquitoes. They had laid out a five-mile course around pylons planted on the airfield and on two islands out on the lake, and the circus challenged any private flyers with their own planes to compete against these in a series of twenty-five-mile speed dashes with a $500 purse donated by local advertisers. That was the first . . . and I guess there's a certain spectator thrill watching four or five ships carve each other up making vertical banks around steel posts when they're flying at a hundred and fifty miles an hour about eight feet off the ground.

The second was more of a production number: a restaged drama of the air war, no less. They'd gotten hold of an old

Vickers Vimy bombing plane. It may not have been the one in which Alcock and Brown flew the Atlantic, but they said it was. Then they rolled out a couple of Nieuport Scouts and a two-seater Bristol pursuit plane and made like it was an Allied raid with fighter protection . . . only the ships were no more than two thousand feet up when, surprise, surprise, they were 'attacked' by a Fokker Triplane and a Pfalz, which old smartypants Duffield had staked out in a field beyond the trees! So we saw a dogfight with hundreds of rounds of blanks fired – or another display of aerobatics, if you like – until the villainous Germans dived back behind the trees with smoke pouring from their tails, and the Vickers made a dummy run over a shack at the far side of the field where some guys let off maroons that almost looked like very small bombs bursting. Mission successfully completed, Captain.

I wouldn't have noticed any of this much if it hadn't been for the fact that, in between the racers and the raid, there was an exhibition of wing walking by somebody billed as Smokey Hernandez.

I just happened to be looking towards the hangar when they wheeled out the Ford Tri-motor – the final race was still on – and there was Smokey walking beside it. Brother, I just went right on looking! Not only was Smokey a girl – she was a creole and she was stacked. She was about the sexiest thing I'd seen since third grade. She was tall and big breasted, and she walked like a cat. She had one of those faces that say Please, and Yes, and Don't you dare! all at the same time. Jesus, I thought, if it's colour you're after, Mettner, why go any farther? The next thing I thought was that I didn't want to see that chick doing gymnastics on an aeroplane wing five hundred feet up in the air: I wanted to see her without any clothes on, doing quite another kind of gymnastics about five inches below me. And I didn't want any crowd around, either, even a crowd as small as the one at Joinville Falls.

The men in the crowd seemed to share my feelings. The race was forgotten: every head turned towards the Tri-motor. And it was then that I saw him. Bruno Faroli, a hood from home. What the hell was he doing in a dump like this, watching some crappy barnstormers?

More exactly, watching Miss Hernandez. I never could figure Faroli out. He looked and behaved like all the other hoods. You get to know the type in my business. But he never quite fitted: there was always something not quite right. The eyes, for one thing. A real killer's eyes look like two dead electric light bulbs. Someone had forgotten to switch off the current in friend Bruno's. Right now he was generating an output of 300

watts per eye, all of it directed at the dusky girl in the tan leather windcheater, the skating skirt and the short white boots. In between the skirt and the boots there was room for a lot of leg. The legs were sensational.

'Just take a look at that!' the announcer said breathlessly over the amplifiers. *'Bomberg took him on the inside at the home pylon! Now the Grumann has the speed – but can the local boy make up the lost ground before they reach that island on the lake? No! No – wait, folks, wait a minute there! Bomberg's trying to catch Margesson: he gained four hundred feet on the leader around the lake pylon; he's turning closer on the pylons, folks, because he knows he don't have a chance on the straightaways . . . There's two more laps to go. He's already up from fifth place to second in three laps: can he make of it? Can he make it? . . . Oh-oh-oh – watch now: he's gonna try and take Margesson on the home pylon, unless he pulls the wings off the ship! There! There! Did you see that, folks? Oh, just watch that aviator fly!'*

The folks didn't see. They were watching Smokey Hernandez walk out on the apron with her mobile gymnasium, just like Faroli and me.

What the hell *was* the guy doing there? From the way he was looking the broad over, I didn't get the impression that he knew her or anything like that. In any case, even if he did, why would he come all the way out here when the mimeographed programme told you that the circus was due for a one-nighter at Sault Ste Marie on Sunday, and then a week each at Escanaba, on Lake Michigan, and Des Plaines, on the outskirts of Chicago? What the hell was Faroli doing in Chicago, for that matter?

Like I say, he didn't quite fit. Almost but not quite. I mean, there was an intelligence at work at the back of that bland *mafioso* face. Every now and then, he'd come out with one of those sour cracks that only movie hoods like George Raft get to say – only Faroli didn't have any scriptwriters: he made them up himself. I knew him slightly, you see. I quite liked him. I even had the idea that he'd like me . . . if only he could allow himself. In fact it was Faroli who'd tipped me off to the best scoop I ever had: an eyewitness report of the gunfight when Sanguinetti tried to hijack a load of McGrath booze with a police escort. The funny thing was that he'd asked me to make a phone call for him first – and the call was to Sanguinetti himself. I never could make sense of the message – it was supposed to be from some speakeasy boss – but I've always figured Faroli was mixed up in that shindig someplace.

My buddy Howie Mulligan thinks so too. Me and Howie

were at Austin High together – but Howie's old man was an Ulsterman, and something of the reformer brushed off on the boy. So Howie became Lieutenant Howard Mulligan of the Hanson Street precinct – to my certain knowledge the only hundred per cent honest cop in the whole of Chicago. Correction: for Chicago read Illinois. Which is tough, because – well, you know how the Windy City is. Howie won't take graft and he actually tries to get criminals sent to jail. Seeing as how O'Mara, his captain, is as bent as a corkscrew, and Hanson Street is smack in the centre of Capone's territory, you'll realise he's just banging his head against a brick wall. Maybe that's why his face looks the way it does.

Back to Faroli. Howie agrees with me that he don't fit. We tried, both of us, a couple of times, to get him to loosen up . . . told him why the hell did a guy like him mess up his life hanging around with gorillas. Asked him to come clean and all that. But he clammed up. Wouldn't say a goddamn word. So Howie said, okay, if he acted like a hood, he must reckon on being treated like a hood. He pulled him in once, got Faroli over a barrel: a bank stick-up. But that boy was covered good. Within a half hour, Counsellor Goldberg, Sanguinetti's mouthpiece, springs him on a habeas corpus writ . . . and then O'Mara is instructed to drop the case for lack of evidence. Lack of evidence! They had a dozen witnesses who could identify him, plus the cops who intercepted him and then chased him on the getaway. What made it worse was that O'Mara himself was all set to send Faroli up for a long stretch because he wasn't contributing to the gallant captain's wardrobe. Until that phone call. Howie was madder than a nest of hornets, but that's justice in Chicago. They sure blindfolded her good in Illinois!

Anyway, call it news sense or whatever, I decided to keep an eye on Faroli. He was sitting alone at one end of a row, watching this girl doing backbends and handsprings out on the wing of the Tri-motor through a pair of field-glasses – an easy enough mark to tail, even in that vast crowd.

When the act was over – and it wasn't bad – he stayed awhile behind the glasses, watching the ships line up for the grand finale. He seemed to pay the old Vickers bomber the most mind. But as soon as they took off, he scrammed out of there and headed for the clubhouse bar. I followed him, and interviewed a glass of paregoric, wood alcohol and reputed orange juice in private behind a potted palm. Faroli ordered a soda and poured his own liquor from a hip flask. I said there was intelligence at the back of those eyes.

Smokey Hernandez rippled in soon after. She had changed into a turquoise woollen dress and one of those close-fitting

hats in some metallic silver stuff. With that face framed in dark air, and then the silver, she looked like a million dollars and fifty cents. She had that edge over the other broads in the bar. Faroli moved in right away and made one of the quickest strikes I ever saw. I couldn't get near enough to hear what he said – I guess the orange juice must have slowed down my reactions – but I made some of her reply. She had a voice like a wood file lubricated with molasses.

'Why, baby,' she said. 'I'd love to. You might even be my kind of guy. Anyway, it'd be kind of wacky finding out.'

' 'Kay,' Faroli said in that clipped, light voice of his. 'I'll pick you up at your hotel at seven.'

I didn't know what it was that he'd suggested. From the way they were looking at each other, it could have been marriage with a built-in fidelity bond or fifty-one per cent of General Motors. On the other hand, maybe he just asked her to have dinner with him. There's only one facial expression for hunger.

Right after that, Duffield himself came up to her. He was a big, heavily built guy, with a moustache that covered his upper lip. He was wearing a hairy tweed sports coat and grey slacks – but the leather helmet was still on his head with the flaps unbuttoned and the goggles pushed up on his forehead. That was just in case you didn't know he was a flyer.

'What ho,' he said. 'How about a spot of the jolly old cup that cheers and does inebriate? Won't you introduce your friend, old girl?'

Faroli says his name before the broad has to let on that she doesn't know it, and in no time the three of them are on the second round. Faroli keeps on rubbing it in about the poor attendance, asking questions about the business end of running an air circus and suchlike. I wonder what the hell he's on about. 'My dear fellow,' Duffield says, 'you simply couldn't guess. You've no idea. I thought it was a top-hole stunt to start with. Bound to bring 'em in, I told myself. Make a packet. After all, the bally aeroplane's the flivver of the future, what? Got to look up before you can get up.'

'But you found it didn't work like that?' says Faroli.

'My dear old chap! If it wasn't for my allowance from the guv'nor, don't know what I'd do. I still think it's a ripping idea – but I hadn't allowed for the running costs, the staff difficulties . . . savin' your presence, m'dear . . . the licences. Each plane has to have a certificate of airworthiness in every State, y'know, and it all costs, it all costs. Then of course you can't actually force people to come when you do perform.'

'You mean the outgoings are bigger than the income?'

'That's about the size of it,' says his lordship, or whatever

baronets are. And when Faroli asks how the receipts have been this week, he gives a theatrical sigh worthy of Barrymore. Lionel, that is. 'Frightful!' he says. 'Absolutely frightful. Let me get you another drink, laddie.'

The next day was even more frightful, by jove. One of the pilots landed the jolly old Pfalz biplane downwind and wrecked it. Tipped it over on to its back and busted his own neck. So the guy was in the morgue, and the Pfalz was upside down on the strip, the undercarriage stuck up in the air as rigid and frail and motionless as the legs of a dead bird. They had to cancel the big finale, of course: you can't stage a dogfight with only one Boche plane. A wind had come up from the lake and blown away the clouds, so they added a couple more specialities by Miss Let-'em-all-come Hernandez to make up for it. One was a delayed parachute drop; the other was just billed as 'Surprise Event'.

You know the delayed drop routine. They take the ship up about four miles and then tip out the jumper, who's sitting in the cockpit nursing a 50lb. sack of flour. As he falls, the jumper opens the sack – and the flour makes a smear against the nice blue sky so that the spectators can focus their eyes on that tiny dot at the head of it that's a human being plunged earthwards at his terminal velocity. Then, just when everyone figures something's gone wrong with the chute, the canopy blossoms out at about a thousand feet, and the jumper lands delicately in someone's back yard. The excitement, like in all blood sports, comes from the apprehension rather than the spectacle itself: will the jumper's mathematics be right? Supposing the air chokes in his lungs and he miscounts? What if the pilot makes an error in altitude and tips him out at 23,000 feet instead of 25,000? Plus of course the fact that sometimes things do go wrong with the chute.

Well, this time the jumper was a she. There was some nice blue sky and it went off all right. Don't ask me why, but the fact that the tiny dot hurtling earthwards was equipped with breasts and a really swell pair of legs somehow made it more breath-catching than usual. I guess it's the St George in all of us: a maiden in distress and the only lances we have are thrusting out our pants. I only discovered the biggest thrill afterwards – it was the first time Smokey had ever done a delayed drop.

After that came the surprise event. There's different kinds of surprise, of course. I remember an Englishman, a court reporter, once told me a story about a case he'd covered. It was a civil case about a collision between two freighters in a dense fog in the Pool of London. They were trying to establish whose

fault it was, and an attorney was questioning an old seaman who'd been the for'ard lookout on one of the ships involved. 'Tell me,' says counsel, 'when you saw the great bulk of that other ship looming up out of the fog, bearing remorselessly down on your port bow, would it be fair to say that you were surprised?'

'Surprised?' exclaims the old salt. 'You could of buggered me through me oilskins!'

The point of the story was that the judge rapped his gavel and told the court shorthand writer: 'That reply will go down in the record as: "Witness replied that he was – ah – taken aback".'

The point of my mentioning it is that this was the kind of surprise the spectators got that afternoon at Joinville Falls. All forty-five of them.

It started out as just another wing-walking exercise. Only this time the Tri-motor was at 1000 feet instead of 500. We were wondering what *was* the point, when suddenly the Bristol pursuit plane arrives out of nowhere and flies alongside – can't have been more than a couple of feet away, wingtip to wingtip. Then Miss Hernandez walks right out to the end, helping herself along with the struts and stays . . . and she actually transfers in mid-air from one ship to the other, steps from the Tri-motor to the SE5 as cool as you please! Quite a performance in a 150 mile-an-hour slipstream, with no parachute, a thousand feet above the hard, hard ground!

Okay. Big surprise. But that wasn't all. The girl does a few more acrobatics. And then, as she's working her way back inboard to the Bristol's second cockpit, she only falls off! Tumbles right off, arms thrashing, and whips away behind the fighter's tail group and on down, down. You could have heard the single concerted gasp from the spectators in Niagara Falls.

What we didn't know was that there was a boxed parachute fixed to the wing of the Bristol – and that she'd clipped it on to a harness she was wearing under her clothes just before she staged the fall . . .

Faroli knew. The chute stopped her no more than 150 feet from the ground, and she floated down as neat as you please a hundred yards from the announcer's box. He was on his feet, applauding, like the rest of us as she walked composedly back to the apron, bundling up the canopy under her arm. But he was shaking his head in admiration, his eyes energised by the full 110-volt current, in a That's-my-baby fashion that tipped me off to the fact that she must have wised him up before. That's the kind of girl she was.

There was something that *I* knew too. The other kind of girl she was. Because I'd found out that Faroli hadn't slept in his hotel room the previous night. He wasn't there that night either – and when he left Joinville Falls, Smokey went with him. What I didn't know – because I didn't really know Faroli – was whether he'd pitched this line just so's he could use the girl to get next to Duffield, or whether that was just a happy coincidence.

Because the guy propositioned the Englishman, you see. He offered to get him out of the financial hole he was in by buying the Vickers bomber.

I was hanging around the club bar and I overheard part of the deal. 'Your set-piece is bitched anyway,' Faroli said, 'without the Pfalz. You're losing money every day. The weather's bad and may get worse. You don't use the ship for anything else in the show. And if things get better, you can always buy another. I'll give you ten grand. Cash. Now.'

Duffield's eyes were popping above the moustache. 'Sell the old Vimy?' he cried. 'Oh I say, dash it all, I couldn't do that, you know!'

But he did. When they packed up and left for Sault Ste Marie, the bomber was left behind in one of the hangars, with Faroli superintending some modifications he'd hired a couple of local mechanics to make to the fuselage. I don't know whether he'd paid Duffield for the loss of the girl, bought out her contract or something. I wouldn't be surprised.

I had had enough surprises for one week anyway. I still couldn't figure it out. Why would a Chicago mobster, even an unusual one like Faroli, pay ten grand cash for a clapped out warplane? Whose dough was he using? What was he going to do with the damned thing – rub out rival bootleggers with bombs? Who was going to fly it, anyway?

He'd seen me, of course. I'm kind of conspicuous, being tall and thin, with a cigarette jammed into my mouth most of the day. Plus I'd been around that potted palm too much not to be noticed. 'Mettner!' he said the first time. 'What the hell are you doing in a godforsaken dump like this?'

I told him. 'I could ask you the same question,' I said.

He grinned. 'I flew planes in the war,' he said. 'Let's just say I'm sentimental. Been crazy about 'em since I was a kid in short pants.' He didn't mention the sale of the Vickers, so I couldn't either. I was none the wiser, even after he'd bought me a couple of drinks and introduced me to the girl. All the same, I added a gossip para to my copy: why would a Chicago gangster, etcetera, etcetera, see above. The Sunday feature

editor cut it out. Don't ask me why. Why do editors cut anything out?

There was just one other thing I did before I left. I called Howie Mulligan person to person at his apartment, told him the story, and posed the same questions. 'Why would he?' I asked when I was through. 'Just tell me that.'

'Search me,' Mulligan said. 'But you were right to tip me off. If that boyo's involved, there's got to be something crooked in the deal. Now it's up to us to find out what.'

'*Us!*' I thought as I hung up the receiver. 'Since when has our special correspondent become an unpaid stoolie for the Chicago police department?'

PART II

Perhaps, after all, America never has been discovered; I myself would say it had merely been detected.

OSCAR WILDE

5 SMOKEY HERNANDEZ

Everybody's heard of the numbers game, of course. Guys bet on any number from 000 to 999, and the winning number is worked out from the first three races at some meeting the gangs agree on. They add up the Mutuel figures paid out by the first three nags in the first race, and from the total in dollars they take the first digit to the left of the decimal. That gives them the first number. Then they make it again on the second and third race for the other two. The guys that chose the winning number get paid out at a rate of 600 to 1 – and as there are 1000 numbers to choose from, that gives the operators an edge, and then some. But they ain't all satisfied with them odds. Dutch Schultz kept a human calculator on his payroll who could actually fix it so's a heavily backed number didn't come up! This character – Abbadabba Berman – would go out on the track and watch the amounts bet on the tote board. From this he figured out the price they'd pay on any horse that might win, plus all the combinations of win, place and show that could add up to that number from all three races. And if it looked like the number would show, he'd place a single large bet that would alter the odds and kill the deal! The guy musta been some kind of genius! But of course some of the mobs tried to fix it rougher ways.

It was nothing new for Smokey Hernandez, shacking up with a hood. What the hell – a hood was just another name for a criminal, and wasn't every single sonofabitch who took a slug of moonshine in these crazy days a criminal in the eyes of the law? The way Smokey saw it, it was the law that was crazy, trying to stop folks enjoying a drink. You might as well add an Amendment to the Constitution prohibiting screwing. Or eating. Because everyone went on doing it just the same, cops and judges and all – and the whole world knew they did it. Only the cops and judges tried to lock the other people up if they caught them doing it during working hours. It made no kind of sense at all.

Smokey remembered reading a newspaper interview with Al Capone. 'They talk about me not being on the legitimate,' the gang boss had complained to the reporter. 'Nobody's on the legit, when it comes down to cases. Nobody's really on the legit. You know that and so do they. Why, the very guys that make my trade good are the ones that yell loudest about me! But if folks didn't want beer and wouldn't drink it, a fellow would be crazy going around trying to sell it. All I do is to supply a public demand. I can't change conditions: I just meet them without backing up. When Prohibition came in there were 7500 saloons in Chicago. This town spent nearly a hundred million dollars every year for booze at the old price. Nobody wanted Prohibition: this town voted six to one against it. Somebody had to throw some liquor on that thirst. Why not me? My customers include some of the finest people in the city, but I'm just a bootlegger. I violate the Prohibition law. All right, so do they.'

That did make sense to Smokey. So it didn't matter a good goddamn to her when Bruno Faroli confided that he was working on a deal with the Big Guy; what mattered was that he treated her like a lady. When they were out together, he took care to see that they went places *she* enjoyed; it mattered to him that she should have a good time too. He was equally considerate when they were in bed. Smokey's breath quickened each time she thought of that hard, muscular body pounding down on her. She'd known from the moment she saw him in the club lounge that he'd be a good lay. The stubborn, slightly cruel mouth, the wide, dark, Latin eyes, the strong nose and heavy brows, had told her that. What she hadn't known was that he'd treat her as another human being instead of a clothes-horse with a cunt.

So far as the more violent side of his profession went, Smokey paid it no mind. Most people were violent some way or another. They two-timed their wives or browbeat their employees or brutalised their kids or destroyed with words. It was just a matter of degree. And at least the mobs restricted their violence to their own kind.

In any case, she had gotten used to the idea that life was tough before she was out of school. Child of a Spanish father and a black mother, she had been abandoned at birth and brought up in the same waifs' home as Louis Armstrong in New Orleans. She ran away when she was twelve and earned a precarious living running errands for the high-yellows working the tender-loin district off Canal Street. Her slender body matured early. A year later she learned that it could bring her ten times more money in a quarter of the time. Before she was

fourteen, she had her own crib in Storyville. Then she moved to Lulu White's $40,000 Basin Street sporting house, the Mahogany Hall, along with such famed chippies as Flamin' Mamie, Big Bull Cora, Lily the Crip and Bang Zang.

Downtown New Orleans was wide open in 1916, alive with navy men and big spenders from the plantations, gamblers and horse racers and Caribbean sugar merchants eager to lighten their rolls. The saloons and sporting houses stayed open twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year – and the city was vibrant with music. Player pianos jangled from the gin-mills and bars, syncopated ragtime wooed the customers in saloons, brass bands marched through the streets advertising dance-halls and cabarets or shivered the humid air with cutting contests as the horn men tried to outblow each other from the backs of wagons and drays. And under the low roofs of packed ball-rooms the exciting polyphonies of the new jazz brayed through the smoke-filled gloom.

Smokey Hernandez went with the tide. As a kid she had run with the second line alongside the Tuxedo Brass Band and the Excelsior and Papa Mutt Carey. Now she got to know the musicians with Celestin and Bolden and Kid Rena, men who played for funerals and Mardi Gras parades and summer picnics out at Milenberg or Spanish Fort. She lived for a while with a honkytonk piano player from Spanola's. After her trick at Lulu White's was over, she would drink with the pimps and hustlers and river-boat men at the Twentyfive or the Red Onion. Sometimes, when musicians from all over the Southern states were in town for the races, she would sing a few numbers at some all-night barrelhouse party. Once, when a dancer was knifed in a back-street brawl, she filled in for a week at Pete Lala's, doing an improvised speciality act of her own in front of a clarinet, drums and piano trio.

She was a good whore but she learned early on that it paid to be independent. Although she had plenty of offers, she never worked with a PI. And when the navy closed down the District in 1917, she decided to get out before her body tired and her enthusiasm died. She left town with a travelling carnival and toured the South and the Middle-West for three years, learning every trick of the trade. By the time she met Bruno Faroli in Ontario, she had been married twice and she had worked in every branch of show business from circuses to cabarets. 'That's what I go for, babe,' he told her. 'You're a real professional.' The compliment pleased her more than if he'd spent an hour paying tribute to her face and figure.

She'd been with Duffield's air circus three months and she was happy enough to quit. The pay was good – when she got it

– and the work was exciting and different. But most of the flyers were hardened, dedicated men, professionals of another kind, whom she found uninteresting as people. They were prepared to accept her, on strictly masculine terms, as a member of the team. But as a woman, it was zero all the way – once she'd made it plain she wasn't in the market as a casual lay whenever some guy's appetite grew too strong for him to master. Faroli was different. He could be tender as well as ruthless, sensitive or dictatorial according to the mood they made between them. And there was a certain mystery about him that intrigued her. Although he laid it all on the line, like telling her exactly why he wanted to buy the old Vickers, and how he was tied in with Capone, there remained an elusive quality that baffled her despite his apparent straightforwardness – and that *was* interesting. She would have gone with him even if he hadn't been flashing a roll as thick as her thigh.

The mechanics he had hired to fix the alterations to the plane's fuselage finished work three days after Duffield's crowd left. The day before, Faroli hired an automobile and took off for Toronto, leaving Smokey to oversee the men. He didn't return until after midnight.

'Good trip, honey?' the girl asked when he had showered and changed into a bathrobe in their hotel suite. She knew better than to ask why he had gone.

Faroli nodded. His sallow face was drawn and there were lines of fatigue etched around his eyes. 'Successful,' he said briefly. 'But it's a long haul, baby. Most two hundred and fifty miles each way, countin' the curves around the lakes an' all. I'm bushed.' He splashed Bourbon into two glasses standing on the night table and added: 'Everything okay this end?'

'Sure,' Smokey said. 'They'll be through tomorrow. One thing, though – there was a cop snooping around the hangar asking questions.'

'A cop?' Faroli swung around, one hand dripping ice cubes. 'How come?'

'Search me, honey. He blew in just after noon. He was – '

'What kind of cop?' Faroli interrupted.

She shrugged her slender shoulders. The heavy oyster silk negligée shimmered over her breasts. 'One of them musical-comedy flatfeet. You know – scarlet jacket, blue breeches and a boy-scout hat. A mountie. He could of walked straight off the stage in *Rose Marie*.'

'Was he checking out every ship there, or just ours?'

'Just ours. He wanted to know what modifications were being made, and stuff. Why had you bought the plane? Where was it going? What was it to be used for? That kind of thing.'

'Jesus!' Faroli said. 'The nerve! What the hell business is it of theirs what planes I buy and what I do with them?' He handed her a glass and swallowed a mouthful of Bourbon from his own. 'What did you tell him?'

'As little as I could. Luckily the boys had quit for lunch, and the hatch in back of the cockpit was padlocked. I said you had the keys and you were out of town. I said I didn't really know a thing about it. I mean like I played dumb.'

Faroli laughed. 'You playing dumb, baby – that I'd like to see! Did you give him anything at all?'

'I had to come across with *something*, Bruno. I couldn't pretend – '

'It's okay, it's okay. No sweat. I just want to know what.'

'Well, I told him the modifications were to strengthen the fuselage so you could carry small amounts of delicate freight. I said you were going into business transporting works of art, scientific instruments and precision machinery that would get loused up on a long truck journey.'

'That's my girl! Did he believe you?'

Smokey shrugged again. 'Who knows with cops? He had a face like night on Bare Mountain.'

'He could find that much out by questioning the guys, once he gets on to them. Anything else?'

'Just that we'd ripped out all the bombardier's controls and the bomb release mechanism. He could check that too – and it should be in our favour! But of course he wanted a looksee inside. That was when I said no dice, no keys.'

Faroli sank down beside her on the bed. 'He'll be back – once he knows I'm here,' he said. 'It could be okay . . . but the guy just might be smart enough to figure out that those baffles partitioning the freight compartment to stop the cargo shifting are the exact dimensions of liquor cases.' He drained his glass and set it back on the table. 'Shit! Why couldn't the bastard mind his own fuckin' business instead of messin' with mine?'

Smokey grinned. 'Maybe he figures it *is* his business,' she said.

'I don't mean the cop. I mean the guy who tipped him off. Because they musta been tipped off. Someone told them a hood from Chicago was buyin' an old warplane, and why would he do that? I think I know who it was.'

'No kidding! Who?'

'Mettner. The newspaper man – tall, thin guy with a cigarette always stuck in his face. He was up here coverin' the circus for his paper. We had a coupla drinks with him. He could have overheard me propositioning his lordship for the plane.

My bet is that he passed on the info to a buddy of his in the police department . . . and the cops asked the mounties to run a routine check.'

Smokey reached for her drink. 'What do you aim to do about it?'

Faroli's fingers had been absently smoothing the pale skin over her thigh. As she moved to take the glass, the front of the negligée opened, and a fold of the heavy material fell away, revealing a curve of dusky skin and the darkly curling hairs below. His fingers tightened on the taut flesh. 'Right now,' he said hoarsely, 'I aim to get me somethin' I been missin' all day long! As for the goddamn cop – fuck him.'

She fell back on the covers and pulled the negligée away from her breasts. 'I have a better idea,' she said, stretching out her hand for the cord around his bathrobe.

When the Vickers Vimy was ready, Faroli took her up for a proving flight. There might be adjustments to make to the trim, he had told the bored Canadian in the control tower, because of the different weight distribution due to the modifications he had ordered. The ungainly biplane trundled across the field and turned into the wind. It was blowing inshore from the lake, bringing squalls of fine drizzle beneath a low cloud ceiling.

Faroli studied the instruments in front of the control column in the circular pilot's cockpit – the needle of the oil pressure gauge trembling on the red quadrant, oil temperature collecting a tan, altimeter set at zero, horizon bubble correctly aligned. She was bigger than anything he'd flown before, and the cockpit layout had been remodelled when she was taken out of army service. He glanced to left and right, listening to the rackety roar of the Rolls-Royce Eagle engines slung between the wings above and behind him. The spinning discs of the airscrews repeated the dull gleam of water from the lake.

Smokey was in the navigator's place, now in front of him and slightly below, unrecognisable in a leather coat and flying helmet, her gloved hands resting on the old Scarfe Lewis gun-mounting which encircled the cockpit. He leaned around the windshield and thumped her on the shoulder. She turned and smiled at him, white teeth bright in the dark face beneath the goggles. He turned thumbs up and opened the throttles wide.

The dry clatter of the motors rose to a scream. The whole ship shuddered under the sudden surge of power. Jerking into motion, she rolled forward and headed with increasing speed toward the windsock on its mast at the far side of the field.

Beyond the blunt nose of the fuselage, Smokey saw a line of

trees accelerating towards her. The wet grass streaked past on either side. And then, as Faroli pulled back on the stick, the nose canted up, the trees sank down, the ship bounced once, twice, and then lurched sluggishly into the air.

The aerodrome fell away beneath them, hangars, clubhouse and parking lot tilting crazily as Faroli banked over the lake and turned in a wide circle to come around behind the field. Smokey had expected that he would stay in the neighbourhood of Joinville Falls, executing various manoeuvres and maybe coming in for a couple of trial landings and take-offs. But to her surprise, he flew steadily away to the southeast at a constant height and speed. There were repeater gauges in the navigator's cockpit. She glanced down at the dials and saw from the air-speed indicator that they were travelling at 150mph. The alti-meter registered 1500 feet.

Sitting out in an exposed position, she found the roar of the motors was almost drowned in the howl of wind through the wires and stays, the shrill scream of the airstream plucking at her coat and buffeting the screen. It was piercingly cold in the unheated cockpit, though mercifully the rain had stopped.

They had been flying for just over half an hour when the flat and featureless land bordering Georgian Bay slanted up towards them. The nose dipped and the thunder of the motors died; the noise of the wind dropped to an alto whine as they skimmed the dolls-house roofs of the lakeside village and planed down in the direction of a wide green clearing in the woods. At the far side of the open space, Smokey could see two covered trucks drawn up beneath the trees, with the ant-like figures of men around them.

Faroli throttled back and put down the two pairs of double wheels only fifty yards from the near edge of the clearing. The tail skid touched a moment later. The ship bounced into the air, touched down again, slewed sideways for a sickening moment, and then, with a burst of throttle, taxied up to the trucks. It wasn't a perfect three-pointer, but it was pretty good, the girl thought, for a guy who'd never flown a Vimy before, landing on an improvised strip in the centre of a forest! But what the hell was going on?

He told her when the airscrews had wheezed to a standstill, before they climbed down to meet the men around the trucks. 'As I had some dough left over,' he said, 'I figured I might as well prove my point to the boss by flying home a consignment of booze while I was at it. I fixed it in Toronto yesterday. There's fifty cases of bonded French brandy in those trucks.'

There were six men and two drivers with the trucks. The drivers kept watch with Thompsons cradled in their arms while

the others unloaded the crates and stowed them under Faroli's directions in the freight hold they had made. All of them were tough looking birds with blue chins and flinty eyes. Smokey kept out of their way, stamping around and swinging her arms in an attempt to restore some warmth to her limbs. She was still slightly deaf from the noise of the engines and the altitude. She saw money changing hands. One of the men signed a paper which Faroli stuffed into an inner pocket, then he signalled her to get back into the plane. They were airborne again forty minutes after they had touched down.

An RCMP sergeant and two troopers were waiting for them when they climbed stiffly from their cockpits back in Joinville Falls.

The sergeant strode forward as they walked across the apron. 'Bruno Faroli?' he said without preamble.

Faroli pushed his goggles up over his flying helmet. 'What of it?' he asked curtly.

'Your papers, please.'

Faroli sighed. He unbuttoned the flap of his jacket pocket and took out a worn passport, aviator's licence, and documents for the plane. The mountie leafed through them and looked up. 'You just acquired this ship from Sir Lynton Arthur Duffield?' he enquired, nodding toward the Vimy.

'What of it?' Faroli asked again. 'Ain't no law against buyin' and sellin' in this country, as far as I know. It's gettin' so a guy can't put through a business deal without some meddlin' flatfoot stickin' his nose in.'

The sergeant's weathered face reddened. 'There are laws covering the operation of flying machines,' he said. 'One of them requires that a ship should have a valid airworthiness certificate.'

'She's got a certificate. You just saw it, in there with the other papers.'

'It's no longer valid. I understand you made some modifications.'

'For Chrissake,' Faroli said wearily, 'we made a small freight compartment in back of the centre-section. There's flooring across the formers; a coupla partitions to steady cargo in flight. I aim to run a service for fragile merchandise. None of the mechanics and none of the controls has been touched.'

'I'll believe that when I see it.'

'You ain't gonna see it,' Faroli said roughly. 'I have to leave this dump tomorrow mornin' and there's a lot to do. I don't have time to fuck around showin' off the local carpentry to musical-comedy cops.'

The sergeant tightened his lips. 'We don't have too much

time in this town for Chicago hoodlums on the make,' he said. 'Open up that ship right now – or you ain't going any place, tomorrow or any other day.'

Smokey caught her breath. It was the same policeman who had called by the day before. If he'd seen the freight compartment kitted out for liquor crates, that would have been bad enough; to show it to him loaded with contraband booze would be a disaster.

Faroli's expression had gone suddenly bleak. 'Just a minute, mister,' he said. 'You watch out who you're callin' names. I got my rights, same as anyone else – even if I do come from Chicago. And *you* got no right to stick your nose into my property without a warrant, and you know it.'

The mountie's face darkened further still. 'I don't have to stand for that kind of lip from no cheapskate mobster,' he shouted. 'Quit horsin' around and do what you're told, you two-bit punk.' The two troopers moved closer, reaching for the flaps of the holsters belted around their waists.

'Show me the goddamn warrant . . . flatfoot,' Faroli jeered.

'The hell with the warrant!' yelled the sergeant. 'If that goddamn plane ain't opened up in two minutes flat, I'll slap a writ on her that'll keep you here thirty days. You can cool your fuckin' heels in the – '

He broke off suddenly. Smokey gasped. The short-barrelled .38 Police Special had appeared in Faroli's hand as if by magic. 'Okay,' he said tensely. 'Let's quit horsin' around, as you say. Unbuckle them belts and drop the irons – fast!'

The sergeant froze, his hand hovering over his holster. The troopers looked uncertainly at him, waiting for his lead. 'Come on – *move*!' Faroli snapped. He thumbed back the hammer on the revolver.

Cursing under his breath, the sergeant unfastened the buckle. The two men followed suit. Faroli's face was grim, his eyes as cold as the lake water beyond the field. The three heavy belts with their lethal loads thumped to the tarmac.

Immediately Faroli stepped forward. His gun arm flashed up and across. The steel barrel of the Colt cracked viciously against the sergeant's temple. As the Canadian threw up his hands and sagged at the knee, Faroli struck again, clubbing savagely with the gun at the other side of the man's head. The sergeant slumped to the ground. 'All right, you guys,' Faroli said. 'Turn around . . . slow and easy.'

One of the troopers paled. 'Look, mister,' he said. 'We ain't got no trouble with you. You've no call to – '

'Turn around.'

Shaking, the trooper obeyed. His companion reluctantly

followed suit. Faroli advanced again, reversing the gun in his hand to hit the first man behind the ear, under the wide brim of his hat. The mountie pitched forward on to his face – but the second man was tougher. He continued his turn, whirling around in a full circle to strike ferociously at the mobster's gun arm with the flat of his hand. Faroli cried out as the blow numbed his wrist. His fingers opened and the gun clattered on the apron.

The trooper leaped in with fists flailing. Faroli's head snapped back on his shoulders as a powerful right-hander caught him on the cheek-bone. He countered with a left hook that slammed into the mountie's solar plexus, ducked under another round-house right, and kicked suddenly out with one foot when he was beneath the man's guard. The toe of his boot landed somewhere soft. Already half winded by the blow over his diaphragm, the trooper folded forward as the air shot from his lungs. Faroli straightened up. Seizing the wide hat brim, he jerked the man's head fiercely down and brought up one knee into his face. The trooper swayed on rubber legs and jack-knifed from the waist with blood spraying from his smashed nose. Then he toppled slowly to the ground.

But he wasn't beaten yet. As he fell, he flung his arms around Faroli's knees and brought him down. The two of them grappled on the wet tarmac, rolling over and over, clawing and butting and gouging.

Smokey picked up Faroli's revolver by the barrel. Standing over the muddied, wrestling fighters, she waited until the Canadian was momentarily on top . . . and then, leaning forward, she tapped him on the back of the head with the butt. The trooper went abruptly limp in Faroli's grasp.

Faroli levered himself out from under, and rose unsteadily to his feet. He passed the sleeve of his flying coat across his forehead. 'Thanks, kid,' he panted. 'Just in time.' He looked past the sprawled figures of the three unconscious mounties toward the clubhouse. 'There's only the guy in the tower, a coupla mechanics, and the barkeep out here today,' he said. 'I figure none of 'em will try to mess with us, even if they saw anything. But we better get goin' just the same.'

'You mean . . . take off right now.'

'Sure. Those guys won't be out for long. They could have half an army group around this place in thirty minutes.'

'Sap them harder then,' Smokey said. 'Or maybe shoot them.'

A curious expression, half indecision, half reluctance, flitted across the mobster's face. 'Aw . . . shit, no. I got enough against me already,' he said.

'But what about all our gear? It's still back at the hotel.'

Faroli smiled crookedly. 'Fortunes of war, sweetheart. I'll buy you better stuff in Chi. This way, we save the hotel bill too.' He grasped her elbow and turned her toward the plane. 'C'mon, let's go. Think you can swing a prop?'

'Been doing it for years, lover. Fly the plane for you, if you want.'

'Attagirl!' Faroli enthused. Together, they hurried back to the Vimy.

The motors were still warm. Each of them coughed instantly to life as she hauled down on the varnished airscrew blades. She climbed up on to the wing, eased herself along the toe-holds past the pilot's cockpit, and dropped down into the navigator's seat as Faroli opened the throttles and kicked the rudder bar to head them into the wind.

They flew straight out over the lake, steadily gaining height. The sky was clearing, and there was a break in the clouds far to the south west, where sunlight beamed down to gild the water, but it was still bitterly cold.

Faroli flattened out at 8000 feet, and the roar of the labouring engines sank to a monotonous drone under the thin, high descant of wind in the wires. The plane crossed the widest part of Lake Huron, winged over the high ground around Grayling, passed Grand Rapids and Holland, and flew on across Lake Michigan. Half an hour later, ethereal in the watery sunshine varnishing the surface of the lake, they could see the pale fingers of Chicago's skyscrapers pointing through the mist along the farther shore.

Faroli had told her that he intended to skirt the city to the east and south. That way he could avoid drawing too much attention to their arrival – and they would approach the improvised strip at Capone's country retreat across open country. 'They ain't expectin' us anyway,' he had said. 'So it could be noisy if some of them torpedoes got scary and start openin' up with typewriters!'

They were already over the tangled road and rail network webbing the outskirts of Elgin when the starboard motor spluttered, almost died, caught again with a roar, and then finally choked into silence. Smokey twisted around and stared anxiously over her shoulder, Faroli was wrestling with some control below her line of vision. He made complicated gestures with his hands, miming something she failed to grasp. Then, drawing a finger across his throat, he pointed downwards over the side of the cockpit in a signal that was unmistakable. Because of the engine failure, they were going to have to make a forced-landing.

She craned over the armour-plate that rimmed the cockpit

edge, and scanned the country below. Chicago was away to their left now, a sulphurous desert of concrete and brick gashed by stone canyons shot through with autumn sunlight under the lowering sky. Beyond the pall of smoke layered over the North Side factories, she could see the tall buildings around the Loop and the grimy thread of the river twisting toward the Union stockyards. Immediately below, the criss-cross of suburban streets rose toward higher ground punctuated by belts of green. Smokey figured they must be somewhere between Lincolnwood and Park Ridge.

They were losing height rapidly. The remaining motor was not powerful enough to drag the plane through the air, though the huge wings provided enough lift for them to descend in a long glide without stalling. The airscrew of the sick engine was feathering, the blades clearly visible as they spun in the airstream.

Faroli banked steeply, kicking on full rudder to counteract the pull of the port motor as he peered down over the side of the machine. The city mapped below them slid away and canted slowly skywards, revealing the leaden gleam of the lake beyond Chicago Harbour. Pushing the stick farther forward, he headed for an oval of dusty green among the skein of streets.

Watching the elliptical open space float toward them, Smokey thought at first that it was a baseball park or maybe an athletics field. Then, sinking lower into the industrial haze over the city, she saw that it was much larger than she had thought. There were grandstands, parking lots, long rows of outbuildings enclosed by a high wall. It was when she distinguished a couple of trailers drawn up on the inside of a straightaway opposite the largest stand that she realised where they were going. Faroli was trying to put them down in the centre of a horse-racing track.

She reckoned it must be somewhere between Des Plaines and Harwood Heights, on the border of Cook County and Du Page. The shadow of a cloud withdrew under one of the plane's wings. In the sunlight suddenly flooding the neighbourhood, she saw trucks and automobiles threaded along a highway like shiny beetles, a flash of brilliance as someone opened a window in a tall apartment building, white smoke billowed above a locomotive in a freight yard. Beyond the rounded nose of the ship, warehouses and office blocks which a moment before had seemed as remote and insubstantial as the cardboard cutouts in a child's picture book now looked alarmingly solid, rushing toward them with dizzying speed. Nausea clawed the pit of her stomach as Faroli stood the plane on one wingtip and side-

flipped a hundred feet to lose height. He approached the track in a series of yawning swerves, alternating full left rudder with bursts of throttle to keep the machine on course. The speed of the plane suddenly became a tangible reality: streets, buildings and backyards streamed toward them and whipped past on either side. The cruciform shadow of the aircraft leap-frogged roofs and walls and raced ahead of them along the turf. Smokey caught a momentary glimpse of men around the trailers, staring open-mouthed into the sky, of a horse rearing and wheeling, and then – with a final roar from the Eagle – they were down.

The landing was rugged. Faroli had figured the wind for an easterly, blowing off the lake. But down on the surface there was a cross-current whistling in from the north – and the ground in the centre of the park was undulating. The starboard wheels clubbed the earth with a shock that shivered every spar in the airframe, followed by the skid. For an instant the port wing hung crazily against the sky while the ship skated across the grass. Then the other pair of wheels crashed down and they bounced to a halt just inside a curve on the far side of the track. Faroli swung her around until the nose was pointing back the way they had come, and cut the motor.

There was a high, thin singing in Smokey's ears. She unbuttoned the flaps of her helmet and banged her palms against her head to equalise the pressure. After the moaning of wind through the wires, and the steady, persistent racket of the engine, it seemed unnaturally quiet. The first sound she heard was the ticking of hot metal as the cylinder casings cooled. Then, as the deafness receded, others noises manifested themselves – the rumble of traffic, klaxons blaring, a distant clatter of boxcars in a railroad yard. Someplace nearby, birds were singing.

She heard movement behind her and turned to see Faroli hauling himself out of the cockpit. 'What happened?' she called.

He pushed up his goggles. 'No ignition. Magneto shorted, I guess. Maybe the wires melted in the heat. It'll only take ten minutes to fix it – if I'm right. But I had to come down.'

'Sure,' the girl said. 'You want I should help you?'

'Not until I'm ready to swing her. Then maybe you could juggle some with the controls.' He produced an adjustable wrench and a coil of wire from a locker, and edged out along the starboard wing.

Smokey climbed out of the cockpit and dropped to the ground. There was still some warmth in the sun and now there were patches of blue all over the sky. The breeze ruffled the

dusty grass at her feet. She looked out over the swell of turf toward the trailers on the other side of the race track, wondering why none of the men there had come over to ask questions. Surely they didn't have superannuated warplanes dropping out of the sky every day?

She didn't have to wait long for an answer. There was a thunder of approaching hooves on the spongy ground, and two horses flashed into sight beyond the white rails behind the Vimy's tail group. The jocks were wearing coveralls and ordinary cloth caps, but the horses were at full gallop, racing for real. The leading animal was a chestnut, three lengths ahead and gaining fast. Smokey watched them around the curve and into the straightaway past the stands, both horses moving beautifully, the riders crouched low over their necks. By the time they reached the trailers, the chestnut was leading by ten lengths. There was a man on top of one of the trucks with field glasses and a stopwatch. Evidently they had dropped into the middle of some kind of proving trial.

Faroli had removed a section of the cowling from the engine nacelle. 'Bastard's fused solid,' he said. 'Whaddya know!'

'Can you fix it?'

'Oh sure. It's only a lead. Insulation perished in the heat and crumbled away. Wires crossed to make a dead short and then melted, as I thought. Won't take a minute.' He fed a length of covered wire in through the aperture, snatching his hand away with a curse as his fingers touched the hot metal. 'Thank Christ it didn't happen over the lake,' he said.

The horses came around again. This time the slower animal, a sturdy bay, was given a twenty second start. By the time he galloped past the stranded plane, the chestnut was only a couple of lengths behind, gaining fast. Faroli was bolting the cover back on the motor. He straightened up and followed the riders back to the grandstand with an admiring eye. 'Some nag!' he whistled. 'I'd sure put my shirt on that one if I knew where it was runnin'!'

'Are you all through, honey?'

'I guess so. We'll swing her and see. But first we have to make our peace with the reception committee. They certainly took their time.' He gestured toward a black touring car and a Packard roadster bumping in their direction across the central reservation.

The two cars pulled up, one on each side of the plane. Two men got out of the Packard and another four from the tourer. But instead of the horsey characters in checkered tweeds that Smokey expected, all of them were dressed in tight-waisted city suits. The driver of the Packard had a long camel coat slung

over his shoulders. There was a black Homburg on his head. The others wore pearl-grey fedoras with black bands, 'Oh-oh,' Faroli muttered. 'I think I picked the wrong track. The guy in the black hat is Teddy McGrath, one of the North-Siders in with Drucci and Moran. And just for good measure, he hates my guts!' He snapped the goggles down over his eyes and buttoned the helmet flaps.

McGrath was slightly built but wiry, with small, pale-lashed eyes set flat in an unlined face. His straw-coloured hair was cropped short, and his ears grew close to his bullet head. 'What the hell do you people think you're doin'?' he said. 'Puttin' down a ship in the middle of my land. This is private property, I'll have you know.'

'Sorry, mister,' Faroli said gruffly. 'Engine failure. It was the only open space I could see. But I fixed it: we can take off again now.'

'Not so fast,' McGrath said. 'Just wait a minnit, you.' His voice was a light, dry Irish brogue. He stared for a moment at what he could see of Faroli's face, and then added: 'That scar looks kinda familiar. I'm thinkin' maybe you'd better junk the headgear.'

Faroli shook his head. 'I'm sorry for buttin' into your track, but I gotta go now. I already loused up a rendezvous at – '

'I said take it off.' The gangster hadn't raised his voice, but each of the men grouped around him now held a gun in his gloved hand. Faroli sighed and did as he was asked.

'Ah!' McGrath smiled thinly. 'Mister Bruno Faroli, is it? A person could be forgiven for wonderin' . . . But what the hell! The boys will go over the ship to see if she has any secrets. In the meantime, you and your lady will come back to the office with me, and we'll find out if you have any secrets of your own.' He waved forward two of the hoods. 'Take them away now,' he said.

6 BRUNO FARRELL

'Then there were the gangsters who came into the place we worked . . . One night a bunch of tough guys came in and started turning tables over to introduce themselves. Then they picked up bottles and began hitting the bartenders with them, also with blackjacks and brass knuckles. It was just terrible. The thugs tore the place apart . . . All over the place people were gashed and bleeding. The mobsters would break a bottle over some guy's head, then jab it in his face, then maybe kick him. They made mincemeat of people. I never saw such a horrible thing in my life. But we kept playing – period. A couple more nights of work and they came and did it again, much worse. That was the finish. [The owner] *got rid of the band, and two days later we found that he had been shot dead. That was the beginning of the mobs moving in on night-club business.'*

JIMMY McPARTLAND, jazz cornetist

McGrath sat behind a desk by a window overlooking the empty grandstands. His coat was draped carefully over the back of his chair and his Homburg was pushed to the back of his head. Two of the hoods had just carried in one of the liquor crates and stood it on the desk. McGrath studied the words *Denis Mounié – Cognac* stencilled across the wood and raised enquiring eyebrows. 'There's fifty cases in there,' the torpedo said. 'Stashed in the tail behind where the guy sits.'

'Well now, isn't that nice?' the gang leader said. 'And who might this delectable consignment of forbidden fruit be intended for, at-all?'

Farrell and Smokey Hernandez were standing in front of the desk, covered by the two men who had brought them in. 'It belongs to me,' Farrell said. 'I bought it in Canada. I was going to place it freelance. Among a few people I know.'

'Is that a fact?' McGrath's pale eyebrows scaled his forehead in disbelief. 'And who'd be after lendin' you a Vickers

Vimy night bomber to run it in, I wonder. The British War Department?'

'The ship's mine. I bought that in Canada too,' Farrell said. He was surprised that the Irishman knew one end of the plane from the other – and then he remembered having heard somewhere that McGrath, like himself, had been an aviator during the war.

'Is that so?'

'Sure it's so. *And* I have papers to prove it.' Farrell fished the documents he had recovered from the mountie out of his pocket and tossed them on to the desk.

McGrath looked through them cursorily and smiled. After the dapper exterior, his teeth came as a shock. They looked like something out of an abandoned graveyard. 'Well, well,' he said. 'And I wonder who put up the money for that little transaction?'

'It was my own dough. In our business, we do handle some from time to time. You should know that, McGrath.'

'Indeed. What interests me more – much more – is where the money comes from.' The small eyes regarded Farrell unwinkingly for a few seconds, and then McGrath rapped out: 'Who staked you to that ship, Faroli? Who are you working for?'

The undercover man thought fast. His ass was in a sling with McGrath. Not because of the hijack battle which had wiped out Sanguinetti's mob and the Irishman's own: nobody knew that Farrell had staged that. The feud had started when Farrell tangled with McGrath's bodyguard over a night-club singer called Princey Hartz. The bodyguard was dead now, and Princey was on tour. But the rancour remained. And since that bloody encounter had ended the gangland truce, Farrell would have been an enemy to the North-Siders anyway because of his Syndicate connections through Sanguinetti. There seemed little to lose, therefore, by admitting that he was working for Capone. On the other hand, the principle of telling nothing to anybody was sacred among the Mafia mobs. The forced landing had wised McGrath up that there was a new method of booze running. But there was no reason to hand him the whole deal on a plate, tell him who was behind it as well. That could mean big trouble for Farrell. He decided to play it cool.

'I told you,' he said. 'Like I'm freelancing. Be your own boss, that's me.'

'Don't give me that,' McGrath sneered. 'No two-bit Syndicate triggerman's goin' to risk upsettin' the big shots, workin' as a loner. The wops would never thole that. There's no room for outsiders in this town, boyo, that's the way of it. Now come on, who is it? Capone? O'Donnell? Sheldon? The Gennas? I'll

not be satisfied 'til I have an answer, I'm tellin' you.'

'You had your answer,' Farrell said. 'I work for myself.'

'Is that so? Well, it's not an answer that'll be satisfyin' me.' There was an ugly light in the Irishman's eyes. He nodded imperceptibly to the two hoods covering Smokey and the undercover man. 'We'll give you a coupla minnits to think one up that'd be acceptable to meself.'

The quiet office erupted suddenly into violence and noise. One of the men behind them, a long-armed gorilla with a face like a side of meat from the stockyards, seized the collar of Farrell's flying coat and yanked it half-way down his back so that his arms were pinioned. The other – he was red haired and almost as wide as he was tall – leaped forward and planted the sole of one boot against the base of Farrell's spine. He kicked out savagely, and the undercover man staggered across the room toward the desk. One of the mobsters standing by the liquor case drew back his arm and punched Farrell low in the guts. The other spun him around and shoved him back toward the first two. Doubled up with the pain from his brutalised abdomen, Farrell lurched into the centre of the room. The gorilla kicked his feet from under him, and he went down with a crash.

Smokey screamed.

The four gangsters moved in and began working with their feet. For a minute and a half, the office echoed to the sound of stomping boots and laboured breath, as the heavy toe-caps thudded mercilessly against flesh and bone while Farrell writhed helplessly on the floor, desperately trying to free his arms and cover his head. Then McGrath held up his hand.

The hoods drew back, panting. Farrell was lying with his knees drawn up. His left eye was closed, his lips were split, there was an egg-sized swelling on the jaw beneath his scar, and an ugly cut gashed his right cheek. Blood spotted the floorboards and mingled with the grime smearing his face and dulling his brilliantined hair.

McGrath stood up and peered over the edge of the desk, leaning his weight on his hands. 'Who did you say you was workin' for?' he asked.

Farrell groaned and rolled over on to his back. The flying coat was split at the seams and one of the sleeves was torn half off.

'. . . said before .. . . working for . . . myself,' he croaked.

McGrath sighed. He slumped back into his chair and waved his hand. The red-haired hood leaned down and seized the lapels of Farrell's coat. He hauled the undercover man upright, drew back a huge fist and unleashed a murderous right that

slammed home over Farrell's heart. Farrell's knees buckled. He threw up. The gorilla punched him on the side of the head. Smokey screamed again as he dropped to the floor.

Through a veil of dust hanging in the sunbeams slanting through the window, she stared beseechingly at the ruin of Farrell's face. Dazedly, he shook his head.

'All right, then,' McGrath said. 'Work over the nigger bitch some. Maybe that'll loosen the bastard's tongue.'

Smokey cried out in fear as the two men who had brought in the case jumped forward and seized her arms. The gorilla snatched the helmet from her head and twisted his thick fingers in the dark hair shingled up from her neck. Breathing heavily, he dragged her head back until the tears spurted from her eyes. The red-haired torpedo spat on his knuckles. Measuring his distance, he launched a ferocious right cross that landed on the side of the girl's jaw. Her head snapped sideways under the impact and she went limp.

The hoods released their grip and Smokey slid to the floor on her face. One of them put a toe under her body and flipped her over on to her back. He drew back his foot.

'No!' Farrell cried weakly. 'Stop! Let her be. I . . . I . . . I'll spill whatever you want to know.' He struggled to sit upright, supporting himself on one elbow. 'All right,' he panted. 'It's Capone. I have a deal with Capone. I put the idea up to him and he . . . he agreed. Just for the bonded stuff . . . to cut out the hijacks. He financed the plane.'

McGrath expelled his breath in a long sigh. 'That's better,' he said softly. 'Why not say so in the first place. It's gettin' so a fella can't get a civil reply to a civil question. Where do you deliver, tell me that?'

'Al has a country place in the Argonne . . . near Howell. We made a strip among the trees.'

McGrath stood up. 'All right then. That's all I wanted to know.' He picked up Farrell's papers, tore them across and across, and dropped them into a waste basket by the desk. 'Now beat it. Take that black whore outa here and scram, you an' your fuckin' machine. I'd have fired the goddamn ship and taken you for a ride, only I couldn't explain the wreckage to the shareholders. As it is, we'll just keep the freight by way of a landin' fee.' He watched Farrell struggle shakily to his feet and grab the desk for support. 'But let me tell you one thing,' he added, leaning across so that his face was only inches from the undercover man's. 'You come bummin' around my territory again, and you may not find me in such a generous mood. Remember that, boy.'

Farrell recoiled from the graveyard stench of the gang

leader's breath. 'I should be so lucky,' he said thickly. Picking up Smokey's limp body, he staggered from the room like a gladiator leaving the arena. Ten minutes later, the hoods heard first one and then the other of the Vimy's motors roar into life.

There was a dive called the Persimmon at 35th and Calumet, a few blocks south of the Loop. It was something more than an ordinary speakeasy, for there was a band and a floorshow. You could even dance, if you wore protective armour for the charlestons. Once, the entrance had been through a fake phone booth in back of a soda fountain, but now this was kept as an emergency exit and they had knocked a way through from a pizza parlour in an alley at the side of the building. Farrell's date with Capone was set for midnight. He arrived downtown a little early, parked the Auburn by the elevated cross-over on South State Street, and walked to the 35th Street intersection. Between there and Calumet Avenue there was a whole block of gin-mills where Manzie Johnson, O'Neil Spencer, Big Sid Catlett and the other powerhouse drummers thrashed out the beat that sparked off the ensemble ride-outs characterising the hot music of the city. There was a line outside the Apex Club, where Jimmie Noone's marvellously exciting clarinet was packing them in, and another at The Sunset, which was featuring this kid Louis Armstrong, who had just left King Oliver, across the road at the Dreamland. A block to the south, on 36th, Freddie Keppard blew his guts out at the De Luxe, beside the Pekin Café, where all the Syndicate hoods congregated.

Farrell limped through the raucous crowd thronging the sidewalk under the electric signs, snapping his fingers in time to the honkytonk music pulsing from every joint. He pursed his lips to whistle as the golden notes of a trumpet sliced the air outside the Sunset. But his face felt like he'd taken second place in an argument with a beer truck, and the idea went into the pending tray. He threaded his way past the automobiles parked fender to fender along the kerb, and crossed the street to the Persimmon.

An olive-skinned Sicilian showed him to a table by the bandstand. There was a five-piece jump band playing on the high stage – a trumpet-alto-piano-drums combination with a brass horn to lay down the changes. They were pounding their way through the black bottom, while fifty couples heaved and jerked on the tiny dance floor in front of the stand. Farrell looked around the long, low-ceilinged room. A curved bar sealed off a quadrant at the back. Beside it was the hat-check

counter. Between there and the dance-floor, rowdy drinkers clustered around small tables covered by purple checkered cloths. Such light as managed to penetrate the fog and cigar smoke struggled from behind wall-bracket lamps fitted with orange silk shades. The curtains at each side of the stage were orange too. Maybe some genius had figured that was enough to justify the place's name.

Farrell felt curiously isolated, like a man with a certifiable disease. They were standing four deep around the bar, yet his table, and the three others immediately next to it, were empty. Five minutes later, he found out why. The Sicilian led a group of ten men in fedoras and wide-shouldered topcoats in through the emergency exit. Capone and Frank Rio sat down with Farrell; the others took their places at the empty tables, forming a human barrier around them. The dance-floor cleared, and the club's two bouncers closed and locked both doors, leaning their backs against them. When the Big Shot decided to visit a night-spot, nobody else came in, and nobody left until he was ready to go.

A busty redhead in a short purple satin dress with a fringed hem half-way up her thighs shimmied on to the stage. The band played a fast doo-wacka-doo intro. Simpering, the redhead put her knees together and swung them from left to right as she corkscrewed down almost to a squatting position, singing in a bright, tinny voice:

> Oh, the bells they ring ding-ding ding-a-ling
> For our wed-ding ding ding-a-ling
> And I'll put your ring ding-a-ling
> On my tingling f-f-fing-ger . . .

'What the hell happened to you, Faroli?' Capone asked when he had given the order to the waiter. 'You look like somebody ran you down with a freight train.'

'That's the way it feels,' Farrell said. 'I got into an argument with a guy. Something personal. It'd have been okay, except that he was able to call up some heavies and I wasn't.'

'A broad?'

'You could say that,' Farrell replied evasively. He had decided to reveal nothing of the forced landing, or the events that led up to his beating. A forger on North La Salle Street had furnished him with new papers for the plane, and he had faked up an inflated receipt for the sale which swallowed the money he had lost on the cognac consignment. Luckily Capone had not known that he was bringing it in . . . and Farrell figured it would be smart to leave him in ignorance of the fact that

McGrath already knew about the new routine for booze running. On the other hand, Smokey had arranged to pick him up at the Persimmon after his meet-up with the Big Guy, and he had to have a story that would cover the marks on her face too.

'Broads,' Capone was saying. 'Nothing but trouble, trouble. It gets in the way of a guy's business activities.' Rio said nothing. His expressionless face was turned toward Farrell, the agate eyes unblinking beneath the heavy brows.

'Talking of business,' Capone said, 'I hear you got the ship back to Argonne okay. Scalise and Anselmi looked her over. They tell me you fixed her up pretty good for the trade. But some of the boys out there was shit scared when you flew her in yesterday.' He chuckled. 'They reckoned the Feds was closin' in on them! You was lucky they didn't cut you down. You shoulda called to warn us you was comin'.'

'I didn't know I was until the last minute,' Farrell said. 'I had to leave in a hurry. The flatfeet in Ontario were askin' too many questions.'

'Couldn't you buy 'em off?'

'Uh-uh. Not these. There was three of 'em – and anyway I figured the dough would be better spent fixin' cops here than in some hick town I'll never see again.'

The gang boss laughed once more. 'Good thinkin', Faroli. So what happened? You fix 'em some other way?'

'They reckoned it was time for a little siesta,' Farrell said. 'That was the one I won.'

> Back in Nagasaki
> Where the women chew tobaccy
> And the fellas pitch a wacky woo . . .

. . . sang the redhead on the bandstand. She stood by the piano, snapping her fingers as the trumpet man tore off a chorus, and then moved back centre stage to take it again from the bridge.

Capone unwrapped a cigar and settled his fleshy lips over the end after Rio had clipped it for him. 'John Scalise tells me he could fix a Thompson on that old gun-mounting in front of the ship,' he said. 'You want I should tell him to go ahead?'

Farrell said: 'Sure. That'd be swell.' He sank his face into his highball glass. The liquor burned his lacerated lips like hell, but it was the real thing. They must stash a special supply beneath the bar for the big shots.

'How long'll it take you to pick your team?' Capone asked.

'Two, three days.'

'Okay. Friends of mine have arranged to supply fifty cases of special champagne for a party the mayor's givin' next week. The consignment has to be picked up in Quebec on Tuesday. Can you make it?'

'Sure I can make it. But Quebec's damned near nine hundred miles. I'd need to make a stop-over some place to refuel – unless I put in extra tanks, and that'd cut down the payload.'

'No problem,' Capone said. 'Tell me where you want it, and I'll have a truck waitin'.' He struck a match. The cigar end glowed and brightened. 'You got the papers for the plane? The receipts an' all?'

'Yeah. Back at my hotel.'

'Check them in with my hatchet man, Jake Guzik.' Capone shook out the flame and dropped the matchstick into his empty glass. He blew out a cloud of smoke. 'He's at 2146, South Michigan. Coupla blocks north of the Metropole. He'll expect you at ten tomorrow. Jake likes to keep the books straight.'

'I'll be there,' Farrell said, excited at the knowledge that there were books to see, thankful that he'd thought to visit that accommodating address on North La Salle.

The band were dissecting the Bix Beiderbecke special, *Riverboat Shuffle*, and fifty miles per hour, the trumpet and alto saxophone alternating the breaks. Beyond the rampart of gum-chewing torpedoes staring impassively at the stand, the crowd, which had stilled to an uneasy silence when Capone came in, was becoming exuberant again. Capone's thick brows drew together in a scowl beneath the slanted brim of his hat. He raised a fat finger, and the Sicilian came hurrying to the table. 'Luigi,' the gangster complained irritably, 'you know I don't go for that razzmatazz crap. Tell Pete for Chrissake to play something sweet.'

'Right away, Mr Capone.'

'And, Luigi – we ain't got nothin' to drink. Whaddya have to do to get some service around here?' Capone's voice rose angrily. 'What the hell are you guys paid for, anyway?'

Beads of sweat dewed the Sicilian's upper lip. His hands were shaking as he removed the empty glasses. 'Right away, sir,' he stammered again. 'I'm sorry, Mr Capone.'

Farrell watched him bustle away and gesture furiously at a waiter. 'Who is that guy?' he asked. 'I never saw him before. I thought Mike Rogolino ran this place?'

'He found he had business someplace else,' Capone said. 'The service may not be so hot, but the liquor's better now.'

'They changed the décor around some too.'

'Yeah. They tell me there was some kind of rough-house before Rogolino quit. You never know what's gonna show up

in the liquor trade.' Capone nodded at Frank Rio. The bodyguard fished a wad from his hip pocket and peeled off two centuries. He stood up and went toward the bandstand. Three waiters brought trays of highballs to the hoods' tables.

Riverboat Shuffle died on the operating table in the middle of a chorus. The pianist beat in four with his foot as Rio returned to his seat, and they went into a slow-drag version of *Sweet Lorraine.* The trumpet player rose to his feet after the alto had stated the theme. Turning toward the corner where Capone sat with his back to the wall, he sang in a gravelly bass voice:

> Now I found joy;
> I'm as happy as a baby boy
> With a brand-new ju-ju toy
> When I'm with my sweet Lorraine . . .

Capone tipped his chair back against the wall and cradled his glass in his hands. He was smiling. 'That's more like it,' he murmured.

They played *High On A Windy Hill* and *Sweet Genevieve* and *Wait 'Til The Sun Shines, Nellie.* The redhead returned and sang about Good Time Charlie, the lonesomest guy in town. The trumpet player, the alto man, and the girl harmonised *Bye-bye, Blackbird.* Capone continued to smile and the hoods went on chewing. The applause, which had been vociferous earlier on, was now no more than polite. On the stand, the only improvisations the musicians permitted themselves were facial expressions meant to show they were enjoying it.

Finally, after the drinks had been replenished three more times, Capone pushed back his chair and stood up. 'Okay,' he said to Luigi. 'Tell the folks they can go on dancing. Me, I'm gonna have a couple with the boys at the bar.' The first person was relative. As he threaded his way past the crowded tables, his belted topcoat swinging from his shoulders, he was followed closely by Frank Rio and then the eight hoods in a compact, munching phalanx. Farrell brought up the rear.

'Set 'em up, Frank,' the gang boss said expansively to the barkeep. 'The drinks are on me.' The line of men and women wavered and withdrew – some fearfully, some respectfully, and some angrily – to make room for Capone and his entourage along the bar. Capone raised his glass. 'Here's to crime!' he said genially. Those nearest to him murmured something in reply and drank. An overpainted brunette called out: 'Good old Al!'

Smokey Hernandez was standing with Jason Mettner in the

angle between the bar and the wall. The newspaperman was leaning on his elbows, with his back to the counter and one heel hooked over the brass foot-rail. His lean, saturnine face was squinted against the curl of smoke spiralling from the cigarette hanging from one corner of his mouth. 'Mettner!' Farrell exclaimed. 'I didn't expect to see you here! What gives?'

'There's always a *Globe* man where the stories break,' Mettner quoted with a lop-sided smile. 'Hell, though – it looks like your story broke already! What happened to your face?'

'Smokey and I share everything,' Farrell said, nodding toward the Creole girl. Her nose was still swollen, and there was a lump on the side of her jaw. She was the only woman in the room with a bee-stung upper lip. The rest of her looked like a Schiaparelli ad. She was wearing a short scoop-neck silver sequin dress with rows of black fur trimming the three-tiered skirt. White silk hose gleamed dully on her long legs, and there were cuban-heeled diamanté pumps on her feet. Above the black fur circling the armholes of the dress, carved jet earrings dangled from a halo of dark hair.

Catching sight of Mettner, Capone flatfooted across toward them. 'Hiya, Jason,' he said. 'What's cookin' on the night-club beat?'

'I got a new job these days, Mr Capone,' Mettner said without removing the cigarette from between his lips. 'They transferred me to the crime desk.'

The gang boss laughed. 'Here's to you, then,' he said. 'Hey, ain't you gonna introduce me to your lady friend?'

The cigarette jerked as Mettner corrected: 'Faroli's lady friend.'

Farrell made the introduction. As Smokey moved out from the bar to shake hands, her face came out of the shadow and into the light. Capone raised his eyebrows. 'Jesus,' he said. 'Was this the dame you got into the fight over?'

Farrell nodded. 'I can't say I blame you, boy,' Capone said. His heavy-lidded eyes swept over the girl's voluptuous body, resting for a moment on the dusky slopes of her breasts above the low neck of the dress. 'Did you ever sing in front of a band, baby, by any chance?'

'Sure,' Smokey said. 'In New Orleans, in Pasadena, in Atlantic City, and in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.'

Capone glanced at the dance-floor. The band were playing *Nobody's Sweetheart*, and there were a few couples dancing the bunny-hug. 'How about giving it a whirl in Chicago, Illinois?' he said.

'Here? Tonight? With a face like this? Oh, I couldn't!' she protested.

'Ah, c'mon. It's the voice that counts,' Capone said.

Smokey looked dubiously at Farrell. 'You heard what the man said,' he murmured.

She shrugged. 'Well, you asked for it!'

She walked away toward the door leading backstage. Capone watched the black fur trimmings flip from side to side below her hips. 'That's some chick you got there, Faroli,' he said.

After *Nobody's Sweetheart* had been wrapped up, Smokey came on stage and leaned over to talk to the piano player. He listened for a moment and then turned around to call out something to the others. The bass horn man picked up a trombone. He beat in a slow four with one foot and then fed out the slide in a long, growling glissando to invite the rest of them aboard a lowdown sixteen-bar blues. The chatter in the room died the death as they waited through the first mean chorus. Then Smokey came on. She stood in the glaring light of a solo lime which revealed with pitiless clarity every detail of her battered face. Grimacing like a burlesque queen, clowning to emphasise her uneven features, she sang in a husky, vibrant voice:

> Oh, I'm so ugly, I'm so ugly,
> I'm some ugly chile.
> The clothes that I wear are not in style;
> I look like an ape each time I smile.
> Oh, how they hate me, and under-estimate me,
> The guys who stand me up eter-nally.
> I'm hunch-backed, pigeon-toed, it's plain to see
> There's a curse on my family and it fell on me.
> The one high-yeller without a fella.
> I'm some ugly chile . . .

The crowd went for it in a big way. There was a buzz of excitement in the room while the alto man ripped off a searing chorus and Smokey trucked around the stand in grotesque parody of an eccentric dancer, and then she was back to repeat the last eight bars and lead them into the ride-out. Waves of applause, whistles and catcalls crashed out before she had finished, drowning the coda. 'Pretty good, pretty good,' Capone said to Farrell. 'I like the new lyrics she came up with. Tell you what – I could use that gal at the Embassy. New joint I just took over on North La Salle. Have her look me up at the Metropole tomorrow.'

'Sure will,' Farrell said. 'Thank you, Mr Capone.'

'Be my guest.' The big shot raised a hand. 'Be seein' ya. Gotta take a powder now. Momma will be waitin' up, back home.' He settled his coat around his shoulders and moved

toward the exit. Frank Rio flipped two hundred-dollar bills across the counter, and the rest of the team followed Capone out.

In the street, by what threats or persuasion nobody knew, space had been cleared outside the soda fountain for the gang boss's three-car convoy. Parked by the kerb immediately opposite the entrance were the flivver scout with Scalise and Anselmi, the two killers jocularly known as 'the homicide squad', already installed; Capone's $30,000, seven-ton armoured Cadillac limousine; and a Packard sedan for the heavy muscle. Four uniformed cops were shouting at the bystanders, keeping the sidewalk outside the soda fountain clear.

The hoods thrust their way roughly past customers sitting at the bar, hustling Capone and Rio along in a compact knot of men. Then, leaving the boss and his personal bodyguard in the doorway, they fanned across the sidewalk in two lines, facing outward to scan the crowd with their hard eyes. Rio slipped his hand between the lapels of his topcoat and glanced around. 'Okay, boss,' he said when he was satisfied. 'Let's go.'

The two of them walked quickly between the lines of men and climbed into the Cadillac. The hoods piled into the Packard. Doors slammed. Capone's chauffeur honked three times. The driver of the flivver gunned his motor and pulled out of the line of parked vehicles into the street.

Farrell and Smokey had followed the gangsters out. Watching the cavalcade roar toward the intersection and turn right into South State Street, Farrell shook his head. 'I wonder if Mayor Dever could find space to park three autos in 35th Street at two o'clock in the morning!' he said.

'That poor guy!' said Smokey. 'Imagine being that scared every single minute of the day! . . .'

7 HELLO, CENTRAL

'Johnny Torrio . . . foresaw the profound social change that the automobile was to bring about, and at crossroads on the bleak prairie highways he set up his first roadhouses with gambling, prostitutes and music for the Stutz Bearcat crowd, the new species of four-wheel reveler and girl-friend who liked the excitement and anonymity of driving out into the dark country to an oasis of bright lights. After the fall of Cicero, Torrio's daring increased and he inaugurated suburban brothels by adding to his Cook County chain of 25 a whole reservation of them in Stickney . . . a dozen houses containing 500 whores who, when police confiscated the ledgers in a 1926 raid, were revealed to be earning the combine $5000 a week. The Barn, the Burnham Inn and the Arrowhead Inn, at Burnham, the first of Torrio's renowned "Fifty-Girl Houses", earned $15,000 profit a month. These were just two of the districts . . . By the mid-twenties Edwin A. Alson, United States District Attorney, assessed that Torrio and Capone were collecting gross profits of seventy million dollars a year.'

KENNETH ALLSOP, *The Bootleggers*

Farrell telephoned the Metropole and asked to be put through to Capone. When he had finally gotten past the switchboard girls and a male clerk and Frank Rio, he said: 'Mr Capone, do you know if Teddy McGrath has a horse running at Hawthorne Park this week? Probably an outsider at long odds?'

'McGrath? That North Side mick? Could be. Why ask me?' Capone sounded preoccupied and irritable.

'Because I figure he may be trying to pull a fast one. If he is, there could be something in it for a racing man.'

'Hold it, I'll check.' The line clammed up as if Capone had clapped his palm over the mouthpiece. Farrell heard the muffled sound of voices, and then the wire was open again. Capone said: 'Yeah. A nag called Sherbet at 100 to 1. In the third race tomorrow afternoon. What gives?'

'I've a hunch he may put in a ringer. D'you have access to descriptions and stuff?'

'Sure I do. I can call Jake on the other line. What d'you wanna know, Faroli?'

'I reckon it might be smart to look up Sherbet . . . and any other horse owned by McGrath or his associates which fits the same description. At much shorter odds.'

'Wait there,' Capone said. This time the line was left open. Farrell lit a cigarette and checked over his story in his mind. He had deliberately held off mentioning his suspicions during his rendezvous with the gang boss at the Persimmon, in case Capone should make a connection between his hunch and the fact that he'd been beaten up. Better to tell him the information had come his way since then. But Farrell was sure McGrath was planning something crooked. A fast horse being clocked in secret by a mobster spelled out only one thing to him. And if the Irishman was aiming to fix a race in some way, Farrell would be happy to see the deal loused up – one, because it would get him in good with Capone; two, because it would even the score a little.

'Faroli?' Capone was back on the line. 'We checked out the form book. Sherbet's a yearling. Chestnut. No wins, places or shows. Pretty much of a dead duck, I'd say.'

'Interesting,' Farrell said. 'McGrath's been running trials on a horse out at Des Plaines. A chestnut. Only this one's at least a three-year-old, with a white blaze and one white fetlock. The only other difference is that the sonofabitch runs like the hammers of hell.'

'No kiddin'? Hold it while I check again.'

Capone was back more quickly this time. His voice was tinged with excitement now. He said: 'You may be on to something, at that. McGrath owns one other horse, Fallen Angel. It was quoted at 5 to 2 last week – but it's a bay. On the other hand, his mouthpiece, Jerry Duggan, has a three-year-old called Sun Ray. It was a 2 to 1 favourite at Aqueduct last month – and it won.' Capone paused, and then added softly: 'It's quoted here as a chestnut, with one white fetlock and a white blaze . . . '

Farrell whistled. 'One fetlock and a blaze – any horse doctor could spray those out easy,' he said. 'I took a gander at the runners in the 3.30 tomorrow. There's nothing special. My guess is, anyone backing Sherbet at 100 to 1 is gonna clean up.'

'Puttin' in a ringer,' Capone said. 'At *my* track. The tricky bastard! Well, we'll soon square that one, pal. Thanks for the tip.'

'No trouble, sir. What you gonna do? Call him on it?'

'Hell, no. Keep it under our hats and clean up ourselves.' The big shot's voice hardened. 'How come you have this information, Faroli?'

'I – uh – I have a girl over in Des Plaines,' Farrell said carefully. 'The rear window of her apartment looks over the racetrack. I was killin' time there this am, when I caught this nag beltin' past another horse. Just the two of 'em gallopin' round and around. So I put the glasses on 'em and I picked up McGrath and his mob with the stopwatches out. That's what set me thinkin'.'

'Runnin' two broads at the same time,' Capone said. 'That could be dangerous. The one you was with last night – Smokey – came by this mornin'. I fixed her up at the Embassy. What time did you go out to Des Plaines?'

'After I saw Mr Guzik,' said Farrell, fielding that one and throwing it back to the pitcher. 'Everything okay that end – the papers and such?'

'Sure, sure. Call me again when you have that team fixed,' Capone said.

Capone called Jake Greasy Thumbs Guzik at 2146 South Michigan.

'Guzik? I want you to do something for me.'

'Any time, Al.'

'Those nags I was askin' you about a while back. It seems McGrath is fixin' to pull a fast one at the Hawthorne tomorrow, put in a ringer for Sherbet in the third race. Right now it's quoted at 100 to 1. One of my boys tipped me off.'

'You want me to lay off?'

'I want you to lay ten grand on the nose of that horse – but slow and easy. Spread it around. Feed it out to the boys, five Cs here, a century there. But check that they lay it on with guys outside the organisation – and make sure they all do it at the same time, so the bets are on before the odds shorten. That way we stand to clear a cool million,' Capone chuckled, 'and shorten the odds enough to give McGrath a bloody nose.'

'You're certain the horses are going to be switched in this race?'

'Shit, no. Not certain. But what the hell *is* certain in this life? Sure enough to take a chance, knowin' McGrath.'

'Okay, Al. You're the boss.'

'One other thing, Jake. The new soldier, Faroli – guy who came to see you this mornin' with papers for the plane. You figure him for a good bet?'

'Seems okay,' Guzik said. 'Got a brain behind that wop

face. The figures checked, though I thought thirteen grand five kind of steep for a clapped-out warplane.'

'It had to be modified,' Capone said. 'Now listen – the guy's gonna work on his own. He'll draw dough from you before each flight, and check directly with you afterwards. He's pickin' his own team . . . but I'd like to make sure there's one of our boys on that team. Somebody who can kind of keep an eye on things and report back to me personally. You know what I mean?'

'I get you. I'll do what I can, Al. I'll get on to it right away.'

'Swell,' Capone said. 'Be seein' ya, Jake.'

The city editor of *The Globe* was hunched over his desk at the far end of the local room when the call came through from McGrath. Typewriters clacked, bells shrilled, teletype machines chattered all around him. It was a quarter of eleven and the deadline was near. Soon the subs and copy readers would leave their tables and troop downstairs to the composing room to put the paper to bed for the home edition. Then the chuntering of fifty linotype machines would be submerged in the roar of presses, and trucks would manoeuvre in the alley outside to load the bundles of tomorrow's news. In the meantime, someone else had died, someone had been shot and wounded, a warehouse had been robbed, an earthquake shook Chile, floods ravaged northern Europe. There were still last-minute stories to be written.

A carrier with copy from the City News Bureau popped out of the pneumatic tube behind the city editor's desk and thumped into the wire basket below. A copy boy unscrewed the cap and smoothed out a wad of flimsies on top of the typescripts piled on the in-tray. The phone beside the tray rang.

The city editor wore a green eye-shade and chewed the stump of a cigar. He brushed ash from the creases of his vest and scooped up the receiver. 'Mettner!' he shouted a moment later. 'Someone for you!'

Jason Mettner pushed his chair from the crime desk and sauntered past the shirt-sleeved reporters typing up their final copy. He shoved aside the editor's in-tray and hitched one thigh on to the desk, swinging a long leg. The editor handed him the phone and sat with crossed arms, pushing up the expanding metal bracelets around his sleeves. Southwards through the window beyond him, Mettner could see lights from the *Tribune* tower, the County buildings, and skyscraper apartment blocks on Lake Shore Drive against the night sky. 'Who is this, please?' he asked.

'Mettner? Never mind who I am. There's a question your paper should ask that needs answerin'.' The voice was Irish and vaguely familiar, though the newspaperman couldn't quite place it yet. He sighed. They got half a dozen calls like this every night.

'Such as?' he said tiredly.

'Such as, why would a Syndicate mobster buy a British warplane in Canada and fly it down to Chicago?'

Mettner stiffened and stood upright, still holding the phone. The question was one he had been trying to answer himself ever since he returned from Ontario. 'And if we asked it,' he said, 'where would we get the answer?'

'From me, sure,' said the voice. 'I can fill you in on the whole deal. The ship's bein' used to smuggle in bootleg liquor from Canada. They land it down in the Argonne, in the grounds of a house near Howell owned by Capone. It's flown by a hood named Faroli. The way they work it is this . . . '

Two minutes later, Mettner was trying to persuade the city editor to cut copy from his column so that he could drop in a panel of new stuff. 'Impossible,' the editor barked. 'I'm already holding the front page for a replate. They're shooting at strikers in England. In *England*, for Chrissake!'

'But, Harry . . . '

'Jesus, Mettner, I can't start screwing up the feature pages at this stage! Look at the time!' The editor snatched a sheet of marked copy from a sub, glanced at it hastily, and handed it to a waiting copy boy. 'Comps,' he ordered. 'Keep it tight, Bronson. In short takes. Don't let it run more than eight fifty.'

'Harry, this is happening right here in this town,' Mettner said urgently. 'Capone has started to *fly* in – '

'I don't give a shit if he's started to swim underwater,' the editor interrupted. 'I tell you it's too late. Lead your column with it next week.'

'Next *week*? But this is hot. I just got a tip-off – '

'Next week.'

'Hell, let me write you a news para then. You could put it – '

'No!' screamed the editor. 'No! No! And once more no! Now beat it before I tell *you* where to put it.' He swung around in his chair and shouted at the city desk: 'Bob! Any more of that strike story in yet?'

Mettner shrugged angrily and went back to his own desk. He dragged the phone toward him and snapped: 'Get me Lieutenant Mulligan at the Hanson Street precinct house.' He tore the corner from a pack of cigarettes, tapped one out, and stuck it between his lips. He was drowning the match in a cup of cold coffee when the familiar Ulster voice growled guttur-

ally in his ear. Mettner blew out a cloud of smoke. 'Howie? . . . Mettner. Look – remember the lead I gave you last week on a certain hood investing in a warplane? . . . Yeah, that's him. Faroli. Well, I just found out what he wanted it for: some opposition guy called to tip me off. I think it may have been McGrath . . . Search me. Some personal vendetta, I guess. Anyway, here's the way it stacks up . . . '

Lieutenant Mulligan's clothes looked as though he had slept in them. Most times he had. It was a tough way to earn a living, trying to enforce the law when your captain was on the Syndicate payroll and City Hall's eyes were permanently blinkered. Most of Mulligan's reports ended up on a spike. In the more flagrant cases of non-action, he sent a carbon privately to a buddy in Washington. Although he didn't know it, these carbons, added to a wealth of complaints from Better Government associations, citizens' committees, baffled Federal agents and ordinary individuals, had indirectly resulted in Farrell's presence in the city. But of course Mulligan knew nothing of 'Faroli's' real identity: when Washington said 'Trust nobody', they meant it.

Mulligan was a short, stocky man with a craggy face and a mouth like the slit in a mailbox. Unkind cops said it had grown that way from too much use. And apart from fast talking, there was wear and tear on the mouth from the lieutenant's chewing habits. A bookmaker asked to lay odds between Mettner's daily consumption of cigarettes and Mulligan's sticks of gum would have had difficulty arriving at a figure.

The policeman left the precinct house soon after Mettner had called him. The pendulum clock over the bull pen told him that it was 11.37 which meant that it was approaching the half hour. Like most everything and everybody else in Chicago, Mulligan thought bitterly as he crossed the street to an all-night drugstore, the clock was a goddamn liar.

He went into the phone booth in the back and shouldered shut the folding door. The number he asked for was in Little Sicily, a square mile of squalid slum tenements housing almost 100,000 immigrants west of the *Tribune* tower.

'Listen,' he said when he had the man he wanted on the line. 'Are you still in with the Syndicate boys? . . . Great. Well, there's a job you can do for me, but I hear tell there's a wop, name of Faroli, who's startin' a booze runnin' service for Capone in an airplane . . . Yeah, that's what I said: an airplane . . . Ain't it the truth? Now here's what I want you to do. It seems this Faroli's recruitin' a team to look after this end of the service – they aim to fly the stuff in to some Capone

property out near Howell – and he'll be lookin' for muscle to block the opposition . . . Okay. Now keep an ear to the ground, you. And the first breath you hear of that deal, I want you into that team. Right?'

Mulligan listened for a moment, and then said soothingly: 'Sure it's difficult. I know. But I'm countin' on you, buddy. You can do it. An' once you're in, I'll be wantin' to stick to this guy Faroli closer'n a goddamn leech, so's you can wise me up on every move he makes. Okay? . . . Swell. I'll contact you later and we can chew it over in more detail. 'Bye for now.'

He hung up the receiver, straightened his tie in the mirror above the phone, and walked out of the booth. In front of the counter, he hoisted himself on to a stool, unfastened his trench-coat, and pushed his soft hat to the back of his head. 'I'll take a salt beef sandwich on rye,' he said to the boy behind the bar, 'and a malted milk.'

'Coming up, Lieutenant,' the soda jerk said. Mulligan rested his elbows on the counter and knuckled his eyes. Behind his bony wrists, the wide mouth was contorted into an alien expression that startled the boy. It was the first time he had seen the policeman smile in over a year.

Captain Terence O'Mara came out of his office and went to Mulligan's room to check that the lieutenant had gone. His biscuit-coloured gabardine suit was freshly pressed, his brown and white calf shoes were polished, and the striped necktie located by his diamond stickpin was new. His pink face wrinkled with distaste as he breathed in the odours of stale cigarette smoke and spearmint hanging on the air. Leaving the door open, he went back to his own desk.

For a moment he sat drumming his freckled fingers on the cover of a folder, and then he pulled out a gold onion watch hanging from a heavy chain looped across his vest. He pressed a spring and the lid flipped open. On the inside were engraved the words *A Present From Al.* It was a quarter of twelve.

O'Mara pulled the phone towards him and asked the operator for the home number of a police captain on the border of Cook County and Will County. 'Hank,' he said when the man he wanted was on the line, 'I'd be obliged if you could do me a small favour. There's a big property called Westwood in your manor. Just on the edge of the Argonne forest, near Howell. It belongs to a prominent local citizen I need not name . . . You know who I mean? . . . You know the place? . . . Swell. Well, our friend's built himself a little airstrip on that property. There may be an occasional ship flyin' in and out during the next few

weeks. They may even try some night flyin'. Now I'd like it if you could tip off your boys to kind of turn a blind eye during that period, Hank. I mean, you know, like if there's reports of noise – or complaints, even – well, they'll know what it is, so there's no call to take up our friend's time with unnecessary questions, or rile him with patrolmen around the property. Likewise if they should see a plane coming or going. No need to go on out there and grill the owner. They'll know it's okay with us.'

O'Mara listened to the voice quacking in the earpiece. He smiled. 'That's real kind of you, Hank,' he said. He snapped shut the watch and thrust it back in the pocket of his vest. 'I'm sure the big fellow will be grateful.'

Farrell phoned Smokey Hernandez. 'I hear you got yourself a job, sugar,' he said. 'That's great. When do you open?'

'Next Monday,' Smokey said. 'At the Embassy. Will you be there?'

'Try and stop me! You want I should mark you up some, so you can sing *Ugly Chile* again?'

'Just watch out, mister! Better men than you have tried – and they all ended up singin' that little song themselves!'

'I guess I'm qualified for that already,' Farrell said, feeling his bruised face. 'An' talkin' of violence makes me think of jealousy. I guess I ought to come clean: I got a girl out in Des Plaines.'

'No kiddin'!'

'No kiddin' when it comes to questions being asked. I went out to see her this am after I passed by Guzik's. That's how I saw McGrath exercising the ringer horse. The kid's window overlooks the track. Get it?'

'I get it, lover. So will you if you ever play that record for real!'

'It *is* for real if you ever hear anyone talk about it – or if you-know-who slips in a tricky question. You know about it . . . and you're mad as hell. Okay?'

'Anything you say, Bruno. Meet Miss Smokey Alibi.'

'It'll be a pleasure.'

'Talkin' of which,' Smokey said, 'when am I going to see you? I got a few things need exercisin' myself – so long as you lay off the bruises.'

'I'm gonna be kind of busy for a coupla days, fittin' together this team,' Farrell said. 'So how about tonight, huh? And I promise you – anything I lay, it won't be the bruises.'

'Mmm . . . I'll see if I can fit you in . . . '

'We know you can do that already,' Farrell said coarsely. 'It's the time we're talkin' about now, not the space – or even the motion. How's about me leavin' right away?'

'We-ell, it's a little tight, but – '

'We know that too. Can't wait to open up that road.' Farrell said in a manic mood. He had the sexiest chick in Illinois, and the plan seemed to be working out fine. He chuckled. 'I'll start as soon as I put the phone down – but I may be a little late: I have to make a call at Des Plaines on the way!'

Smokey said something unladylike and hung up on him. Farrell grinned. It hurt his face, but it was worth the effort. He ran out of the hotel, started up the Auburn, and drove toward the apartment Smokey had taken on Randolph Street.

PART III

You can figure out gangdom's murders and attempted murders with pencil and paper, but not with a judge and jury.

– Chicago Deputy Police
Commissioner JOHN STEGE

8 BRUNO FARRELL

On the platform was the orchestra from a downtown hotel, in dinner coats. The proprietor and a second man were conferring with the leader. 'Let them play jazz,' the second man said. 'Never nobody liked dancing no better than Red.'

'No, no,' the proprietor said. 'Time Gene gets them all ginned up on free whiskey, they'll start dancing. It'll look bad.'

'How about the "Blue Danube"?' the leader said.

'No, no; don't play no blues, I tell you,' the proprietor said. 'There's a dead man in that bier.'

'That's not blues,' the leader said.

'What is it?' the second man said.

'A waltz. Strauss.'

'A wop?' the second man said. 'Like hell. Red was an American. You may not be, but he was. Don't you know anything American? Play "I Can't Give You Anything But Love". He always liked that.'

WILLIAM FAULKNER, *Uncle Bud and the Three Madams*

Westwood was a big colonial mansion facing eastward over the city towards the lake. It was set on high ground at the edge of the forest, and the stockyard meat king who had modernised the property before the war had widened a natural clearing to make a full-sized polo field in the parkland surrounding the house. It was this that Farrell was using as a make-shift airstrip. The place was easy enough to locate at night if there was a moon: it lay a couple of miles east of the confluence of Stony Creek and the Calumet Sag Channel – and this water junction could be located by flying south-west from the harbour along the triple course of the Des Plaines River, the Chicago Ship Canal and the Illinois and Michigan Canal. But when there was nothing to silver the water surface amongst the wilderness of lights mapping the city against the dark, precise navigation was more difficult. Flying six thousand feet above the suburbs on his fourth run in from

Canada, Farrell cursed the towering alto-cumulus cloudbank which had piled up over the lake and blotted out the late rising last quarter. Thank Christ he'd had the sense to hire the Mexican, Mendoza, along with the rest of the team! It was Mendoza who'd thought up the idea of planting alternate red and blue electric flashers to mark the landing strip: small though they were, they showed up a hundred times better than the brightest yellow flares against the numberless parallels of street lighting criss-crossing the dark earth below.

On the whole, Farrell thought, banking to change course a couple of points to the south, he was fairly satisfied with the five men he had chosen. There hadn't been too much choice, of course: Chicago was teeming with hoods, but most of them were already on some boss's payroll. And in any case he had been obliged to pick from such freeloaders as he could find at the Friar's Inn, the Pekin Café and half a dozen other known gangsters' haunts: he had neither the time nor the knowledge to seek them out in the slums which bred them.

He had picked up Mendoza and Slats Halperin at the Four Deuces, the Capone gang whorehouse and gambling joint at 2222 South Wabash Avenue. Danny Blackfingers d'Amato came to him as the result of a chance meeting in Diamond Joe Esposito's Bella Napoli Restaurant. And the remaining two, Angelo Ralfini and Boscoe – well, that was one hell of a coincidence, no kidding! He'd been passing a poolroom on Quincy Street and just happened to look in the door . . . and there they were: two guys who'd been in on the jailbreak he'd engineered as part of his cover before he came to Chicago! Of course they'd been grabbed and put back inside once Farrell was clear: the law doesn't let go as easily as that. But now they'd been paroled by Governor Small's Illinois Pardons Board, the big-joke committee responsible for staffing half the mobs in the Windy City. Flash Butcher, the junkie who'd master-minded the break, was still in solitary.

Boscoe was a lumbering giant who had once driven beer trucks for Bugs Moran and the other North-Siders. The change of allegiance didn't worry him, for Boscoe had passed out omega minus when intelligence was examined, with the result that he spent more time inside than out. This was kind of rugged, for he fancied himself as a ladies' man and broads don't come too thick on the ground in the pen. On the other hand, there must have been ladies who didn't share Boscoe's view of himself. He had been doing a stretch for rape.

Angelo was a New Yorker – a hard-bitten, droop-eyed boy whose folks had come from Calabria. That wasn't near enough to Sicily for him to be accepted in the Mafia, and he was bitter

as hell about it. Because he was bitter, he was ruthless, a killer who slayed for the hell of it. He was only tough when he had a gun in his hand and a knife in the waistband of his pants, but Farrell figured the regular $1000 a week he'd been told to offer – plus the fact that he'd be working for a team at least allied to the Mafia – would be enough to buy the boy's loyalty for as long as it was needed.

It was crazy – Farrell thought as he sighted the river and the two canals among the galaxy of lights below – how you got absorbed in the job for its own sake. Here he was evaluating the team as though his primary interest was running booze to bitch the North-Siders. He mustn't lose sight of the fact that the whole deal had been fixed so that he could get the lowdown on Capone's finances! He pushed the stick forward and lined up the plane for the run-in.

In the for'ard cockpit, Danny d'Amato's goggled head was craned over the rim searching for the next landmark – the Stony Creek – Sag Channel confluence. Danny was a find. He wasn't called Blackfingers for nothing. There wasn't a goddamn thing about an internal combustion engine that he couldn't improve – or fix if it went wrong. He was a nut-faced, uncommunicative little man who'd worked for years as a freelance, hotting up the motors of getaway cars and breathing on stolen jalopies until even their owners would swear they'd never seen them before. Farrell was convinced he'd only come in because it meant he could look after the Rolls-Royce engines.

The other two were less complicated. Mendoza had discovered that the American Dream didn't apply to greasers, so he'd decided, coolly and rationally, to take what he wasn't allowed to earn. He'd be a useful man in a tight spot because he wasn't afraid to take decisions – and act on them. Slats Halperin was just a hood, big and blond and mean. He shot where he was told to shoot, for as long as the dough kept coming.

Farrell was down to two thousand feet. The motors were running sweetly – more sweetly than they'd ever done, since Blackfingers had tweaked them – and the Y-shaped stretch of water he was looking for suddenly appeared ahead and to starboard, shining with reflections from a line of headlamps. Another successful trip was almost through. He banked again and flew over the irregular patch of darkness marking the forest.

Danny d'Amato was half turned in his cockpit, gesturing over the side of the machine. Farrell peered ahead . . . and saw the double row of red and blue lights flashing, tiny but unmistakable, a little before the twinkling street-plan of Howell

imprinted on the night. He throttled back and dropped the Vimy out of the sky. Wind moaned in the wires as they lost height.

Trees rushed blackly past beneath them. Then they were level with the pillared façade of the house, sinking between the red and blue flashers . . . and suddenly Farrell slammed on full throttle and dragged back the control column. The motors roared in an unexpected crescendo of noise; the plane shuddered, staggered back into the air, clawed its way upwards over the woods at the far side of the field. Beyond the runway lights, past the livid flames of the exhausts stabbing the dark, he had seen alien points of fire twinkling on the perimeter of the old polo ground.

Something was wrong.

Farrell threw the old bomber into a steep climbing turn, flattened out, banked once more, and then dived on the field from the other direction. The runway lights streamed toward them. He switched on the twin searchlights that d'Amato had rigged up on the leading edges of the wings. As they swept across the clearing at less than fifty feet, the powerful beams illuminated men crouched behind the truck waiting to load their cargo . . . another truck and two touring cars drawn up under the trees . . . more men, behind the cars, flattened on the ground . . . and again those stabbing pinpoints of flame that could only mean gunfire around the field.

Westwood was under some kind of attack. Maybe the new service wasn't as immune from hijackers as Farrell had led Capone to believe.

Danny d'Amato had read the signs too. By the time Farrell turned to skim the runway again, he had slotted the Thompson on its improvised cradle into the Scarfe mounting surrounding the front cockpit. Leaning into the wind howling past the exposed nose of the Vimy, he struggled to his feet and tilted the gun downwards. As they thundered overhead, he opened fire and hosed the ground around the two tourers and the second truck with lead.

Farrell saw figures scattering for the shelter of the trees, and then they were past and climbing for a fourth run. D'Amato banged another drum into the Thompson and repeated the dose. This time there was opposition: fire spat back at them from the edge of the woods as they flew over.

Three more times Farrell crossed and recrossed the clearing. Then the racket of the blazing submachine-gun ceased. D'Amato spread his hands to indicate he was out of ammunition and dropped back into his seat.

Farrell circled over the trees and put the machine down. He

landed at the far end of the flarepath, at an angle to its axis, so that the Vimy ran away from the invaders and finally bounced to a stop with its motors idling behind Capone's truck.

Boscoe was flat on his face beneath the cab, a flaming, bucking Thompson in his huge hands. Angelo, Mendoza and Capone's two drivers were firing revolvers and sawn-off shotguns from behind the tail-gate. The truck's windshield was shattered and the hood was fuller of holes than the edge of a postage stamp. There was still sporadic shooting from the far side of the runway, though the range was too great for accuracy.

Slats Halperin stood behind the tail-board, yelling up at d'Amato in the nose of the plane. D'Amato gestured at the Thompson and held up an empty magazine. Finally Halperin got the message. He dived into the interior of the truck, reappeared with half a dozen drums and tossed them up to the gunner. Farrell too was gesticulating, shouting at Mendoza. When he had made himself understood, the Mexican waved the others aboard the truck and crawled through to the driving seat.

Farrell opened the throttles and kicked the rudder bar. The Vimy swung slowly around and bumped across the field toward the three vehicles beneath the trees, with d'Amato, crouched behind the gun-mounting, blazing a hail of slugs down from the uptilted nose. The truck advanced at the same time, a few feet wide of the starboard wingtips. Mendoza was ducked down below the scuttle while shotguns roared beside him and revolvers spat from the side windows of the cab. Boscoe lumbered along behind, loosing off an occasional burst from the shelter of the truck.

The battle was noisy but brief. The attackers – there seemed to be about ten of them – had gathered behind the touring cars. For a time they poured a concentrated stream of fire at Farrell and his men. One of Capone's drivers stopped a bullet in the shoulder and fell from the cab to writhe on the runway. Both the truck's front tyres were punctured and rolled off the wheel rims. Ragged holes appeared in the fabric of the Vimy's wings. But the high, tilted nose of the bomber, and the armourplate around the gunner's cockpit, shielded Farrell and d'Amato. At the same time the little mechanic's position high above the ground gave him the advantage over the invading hoods. He could see over the tops of the cars and force them to keep down as he banged drum after drum into the gun and sprayed a murderous rain from side to side.

Finally the combination of plane and truck remorselessly bearing down on them with guns blazing broke the hijackers' nerve. Two machine-gunners ran frenziedly back to the shelter

of the trees to blast off covering fire while the remainder piled into the tourers, dragging two wounded men with them. The motors roared to life, and the cars wheeled around, their tyres churning up the soft ground. Still spitting flame over the open sides, they careered away among the birches and pines to rejoin the driveway curving up through the woods towards the house.

Farrell watched the receding headlamp beams flicker away behind the boles of the trees. He switched off the Vimy's motors and clambered stiffly to the ground. After the appalling clamour of gunfire and the racket of the Eagles, the night seemed abnormally quiet. Steam hissed gently from the truck's perforated radiator. Somewhere behind them, an owl hooted.

Danny d'Amato dropped down beside him. 'Some welcome!' he said. 'Take me a coupla days to patch the ship up. Thank Christ they never hit the airscrews!'

'Yeah,' Farrell said slowly. 'What bugs me is how they knew we was comin' tonight.'

Mendoza hurried up with Boscoe and Angelo. 'Them bums near had us runnin',' he panted. 'If you hadn't of showed up when you did . . . '

'Who were they?' Farrell asked. 'Any ideas?'

The Mexican shrugged. 'Search me. North-Siders, I guess.'

Farrell looked around at the wounded Capone hood, who was sitting up on the runway nursing his shoulder. 'Any other damage?'

'Slats stopped one in the last exchange,' Angelo said. 'Bastards laid him low. But it's no more'n a crease. He'll be okay in the mornin', 'cept for the worst goddamn headache he ever had.'

Farrell nodded. 'Better 'tend to him and the driver before we shift the cargo,' he said. 'Boscoe – you and Angelo take the driver into the house. Mendoza and me'll look after Slats.'

The second driver came up to the group. 'They left a stiff behind,' he said, jerking his head towards the invaders' abandoned truck.

'No shit!' Farrell looked across. Beyond the chewed-up ground where the cars had turned, a dark shape lay sprawled beneath the trees. 'C'mon – we'll go take a looksee.'

'Only one thing,' the driver said. 'That's a consignment of Seagram's V.O. you got in that ship. The boss says it's kind of urgent. I have to make a delivery in Calumet City before midnight, and bein' as how we're delayed an' all . . . well, time's a-wastin'.' He jerked his head again, this time towards the runway. 'Mike havin' stopped one, I'll have to unload on my jack, so every minute counts. You know how the boss is.'

'Sure,' Farrell said. He knew how the boss was. 'Mendoza,

Danny, Angelo – help this guy move them crates outa the plane and into that truck. Me and Boscoe can handle the casualties.'

'You're kidding,' Mendoza said. 'That truck's got a busted radiator, no windshield, and square wheels in front by now. You'd never get – '

'Jesus, you're right!' the driver interrupted. 'I was forgettin' that battle wagon was *my* truck. Can you beat that?'

'Okay, okay,' Farrell said. 'Start shifting the stuff outa the plane. You can use the truck those bastards left behind. I'll go back her up now.'

Apart from a diagonal line of holes in the canvas top, and a shattered window in the cab, the truck seemed to be intact. Before he drove it over to the Vimy, Farrell walked across to the dead man and turned him on to his back. Congealed blood soaked his jacket where the Thompson slugs had smashed through his chest. In the alternating blue-red glare still pulsing from the runway flashers, lifeless eyes winked grotesquely in the livid mask of a face. Farrell recognised him immediately. It was one of the torpedoes who had brought the case of cognac into McGrath's office at the racetrack the week before. No need to guess who was behind the hijack attempt now.

There were no Capone soldiers resting up at Westwood. With the booze war hotting up again, such luxuries had to take second place. Maggie Renato, the retired Stickney madam who looked after the house, had opened up a couple of rooms for Farrell's team, but the rest of the place was shuttered and empty. When Boscoe and the undercover man brought in Halperin and the injured driver, she unlocked the poolroom behind the curving stairway and laid them out on one of the tables. 'Al has a doctor out at Howell on the payroll,' she told Farrell. 'I'll call him right away. He'll come on out with a private ambulance and take these birds off our hands.'

'That's my girl,' Farrell said. 'Sooner we get the ambulance and that truck outa here, sooner we can face the cops . . . if they shoulda heard the fireworks and come to ask what the hell?'

'They won't,' Maggie assured him. 'We got protection here.'

'Okay – sooner you and me can be alone then,' Farrel said gallantly.

She tossed her platinum head. 'Honest!' she said. 'You Italians!'

The law might have been warned off the estate, but the long arm could still operate outside. Farrell saw off the truck, waited until the doctor had collected Halperin and the driver, and then drove back to Chicago. That is to say he started to drive back. Fifty yards outside the gates of Westwood, two

police flivvers closed in on the Auburn with gongs clanging and forced him to the side of the road. Cops with drawn guns surrounded the car and hauled him out. 'All right, buster,' the sergeant in charge of the detail said. 'You're coming downtown with us. Lieutenant Mulligan has a few questions he figures you can answer.'

The roadster which had been tailing Farrell since he left the house followed them all the way to Hanson Street. Once he had seen the undercover man hustled up the steps into the precinct house, the driver cut the motor, hurried across to the all-night drugstore, and called Capone at his home number.

9 BRUNO FARRELL ET AL

'I spent a lot of time with the mob and saw Capone often . . . I wrote hundreds of stories about him. I'd accuse him of a murder today and meet him tomorrow, and neither of us would mention the subject . . . Still, the more I wrote about him, the more he liked it. He loved the limelight and was always willing to yak a little with reporters. He liked the advertising. It made better business for him. It made it easier for him to intimidate the customers. We built him up as the big shot in the gang world.'

JAMES DOHERTY, ex-*Chicago Tribune* crime reporter

'I'd rather the newspapers wouldn't print a line about me. That's the way I feel. No more brass bands for me. There's a lot of grief attached to the limelight.'

AL CAPONE

Lieutenant Mulligan snatched off his hat in mid-stride and flung it on to the confusion of papers littering his desk. The corners of his mailbox mouth were drawn down and his brows were creased into a scowl. 'Are you telling me,' he shouted, 'that this flyin' machine you drive has nothing to do with booze runnin'? Is that what you're tryin' to say?'

Farrell lolled back in the chair on the other side of the desk, his left ankle negligently resting on his right knee. 'Certainly,' he said calmly.

'Then what the hell are you doing with the goddamn ship?'

'I like flying,' Farrell said. 'Sense of freedom. Space to move around in. Nobody leaning on you if you want to get from here to there. You know.'

'You couldn't do any of those things on the ground, of course, like anyone else?' Mulligan asked sarcastically.

'Not in Chicago. Not with police inefficiency the way it is. Too many traffic jams.'

The lieutenant flushed. 'The police department would have

more time to attend to traffic duties if there were less cheapskate hoods around fouling up the city,' he said. 'Where did you learn to fly?'

'My mother taught me when I was in diapers. She said it was the best way to avoid inquisitive cops.'

Mulligan breathed heavily. 'Did she teach you to pistol-whip them too? And leave them lyin' on the apron on Canadian airfields? Was that part of the deal – or is that your own way of avoidin' awkward questions?'

The undercover man grinned. 'Point to you, Jack. You got an extradition warrant?'

'You know goddamn well I haven't,' the policeman choked. 'If I had, you'd be downstairs in the cells instead of sassing me up here. And don't think that wouldn't bring me a whole heap of pleasure, boy. But right now there ain't but a local warrant sworn out in Ontario – assault and obstructin' officers in the course of their duty, among other things.'

'I'll handle that when I go there. If I go there. So what am I doing here, now, today? You got an assault warrant in your pocket too?'

Mulligan didn't reply directly. He slumped into his chair and unwrapped a stick of gum. 'I just want to know,' he said plaintively, making a special delivery into his mouth, 'why the hell you want to have a warplane in Chicago.' He began to chew.

'I told you. I like to have – '

'Sure, sure. I know. Spare me the free-as-air routine, for Chrissake. And for this you're prepared to spend ten grand?'

Alarm bells rang in back of Farrell's mind. 'Thirteen and a half,' he corrected.

'Big shot!' Mulligan sneered. 'My information says ten.'

Farrell shrugged. 'She had to be modified.' There was only one way the lieutenant could possibly have gotten that information: that goddamn newspaperman, Mettner, *had* overheard him talking with Duffield. That could be damned awkward if the true figure ever got back to Capone – a hard man to cross, as he had said himself . . .

'Modified, hey?' Mulligan was sitting up in his chair, his gums working overtime sorting the spearmint mail. 'Fitting extra tanks, maybe? For booze?'

'Look, lay off, willya?' Farrell said wearily. 'She was still kitted out as a bombing ship. The guy I bought her off was running some kind of air pageant shit. I wanted her for private use – and I don't have no permit to carry bombs, not even in Chicago.'

'I want to see those modifications,' Mulligan said thickly

through the gum. 'I aim to take a look at that ship.'

'Not without a warrant, you don't. An' you won't get one, and you know it. She's on private ground, the country residence of Mr Al Brown – '

'Otherwise known as Tony Caponi or Alphonse Scarface Capone, vice boss, racketeer and booze baron.'

Farrell shrugged. 'I know him as Al Brown. He's a dealer in secondhand furniture, with a store on South Wabash.'

'Sure. Number 2220. In the same building as the Four Deuces, the lousiest stinkin' whorehouse and gambling joint in town. You sure pick your friends, Faroli.'

'I'll tell you one thing,' Farrell snapped. 'I don't pick 'em on account of the neighbours they happen to have. Maybe you do – if cops have any friends.'

Mulligan placed his fingers on the edge of the desk and tilted his chair back. His lantern jaw stopped moving and he stared coldly at the undercover man. 'Why don't you keep your new toy on the municipal airfield?'

'Because Al *is* a friend. He lets me use his place for free. You think I want to pay fuckin' airport dues after all I laid out for the ship?'

Mulligan jumped to his feet. 'Where'd you get the dough to buy that plane?' he snarled.

'That's my business,' Farrell said.

'It's my business too!' the policeman yelled. 'Anything that allows a two-bit hoodlum to parade around this town like he owned the place – anything that helps some cheapskate mobster think he can go around threatening folks with guns and graft – is my business. My business is to see that the law is respected, and – '

'And, by God, you're gonna do it,' Farrell finished for him. 'Okay, big shot, tell me one thing: am I under arrest?'

Mulligan reached for another stick of gum. This one was docketed Express. His jaws closed over the wafer like a steel trap. 'Not yet,' he said.

'All right. So why am I here?'

'You know goddamn well why you're here, Faroli. I asked you to come here so's I could question you – '

'Asked me to come here?' Farrell cut in. '*Asked* me to come? Pushing my auto off the road with two carloads of bulls waving rods in my face? If that ain't threatening folks with guns, I'd like to know what is. As for the graft – ask your captain why you couldn't get permission to raid the place where my plane's kept. On your own showing, you bastards are no better than the people you're callin' names.'

It was a chance shot but it went home. Mulligan's face

turned an even darker shade of red. 'Bejaysus, Faroli, one day you'll go too far,' he muttered.

'Right now I'm more interested in going home,' Farrell said. He uncrossed his legs and leaned down to pick his hat from the floor beside his chair. 'If there's nothing more I can do for you?'

'You don't leave here until I get a straight answer to my questions. There was a gun battle out at Capone's place tonight. I want to know – '

'Gun battle? You must be mistaken, Lieutenant. We had some fire crackers left over from the Fourth of July. We were having a party, and – '

'Don't give me that crap!' Mulligan was shouting again. 'There was a gunfight out there. People heard it all over. We got reports.'

'You *heard* reports, you mean. What folks thought they heard, and what they can prove, is two different things. *You* should know how unreliable witnesses are in this town. So if you're figurin' on holding me as a material witness to something you can't prove happened – forget it.'

Mulligan swallowed. 'Plus,' he said, 'I want to know how come you could raise the money to buy that plane. For the last time – where did you get the dough?'

'You insist?'

'Insist? What kind of fancy talk is that? Sure I insist – which is to say, you're gonna answer that question or else.'

'In that case,' Farrell said smoothly, 'I shall plead the Fifth Amendment. Which is to say' – he mimicked the lieutenant's strangled delivery – 'I must decline to answer the goddamn question on the ground that it might, repeat, might, tend to incriminate me.'

Mulligan appeared to be in danger of imminent apoplexy. 'Why,' he stormed, 'you cheapskate little . . . '

Farrell stood up. 'Look,' he said curtly. 'That's the third time you used that word. I don't have to stay here listening to you insult me and my friends. If you got nothin' more to say and no charge to make, I'm gettin' out.'

Mulligan leaned forward across the desk, resting his weight on his knuckles. 'Just remember this, you,' he growled. 'You got no protection now that Sanguinetti's outa the way. You think you're so damned smart – but one day you're gonna step outa line. And when you do . . . brother, am I gonna throw the book at you!'

Farrell said: 'My car was forced off the road near Howell. Bein' as how you brought me into town for nothing, I guess you'll have one of your patrol cars drive me back there?'

The policeman grabbed his hat and jammed it back on his head. 'Get the hell outa here, Faroli,' he roared. 'Beat it before I run the risk of facin' an assault charge myself!'

Farrell grinned and got the hell out of there.

He was still smiling when he ran down the steps outside the precinct house. But the expression on his face mirrored none of the doubts in his mind. Mulligan could have learned the price he paid for the plane from Jason Mettner. McGrath had forced the location of the airstrip out of Farrell himself. But it had also been splashed in Mettner's crime round-up in that day's *Globe*. Mettner couldn't have picked up *that* piece of information in Joinville Falls. *How the hell had he found out? And how had Mulligan known that he'd be flying in a consignment that evening – and at approximately what time?*

Farrell had always accepted the possibility that one of his team would be a plant on Capone's personal payroll, put there to keep an eye on him. Now it looked as if there was another spy in the camp – working for the law!

He paused on the sidewalk to look at his watch. It was almost 1.30. The clouds which had built up over the lake had blotted out the stars. Wind rustled scraps of paper and empty cigarette packs along the gutter, slanting the first drops of rain through the lamplight. The Auburn could wait until tomorrow; if he hurried, he could make the Embassy in time to pick Smokey up after her show. Turning up his coat collar, Farrell strode away towards the Loop, wondering which of the hoods in his group was a stoolie.

He could have picked out one if he'd retraced his steps. The door of the roadster parked outside the drugstore opened, and the driver went inside. For the second time that night he asked the phone operator for a Grand Crossing number. 'Chief,' he reported, 'Faroli just left the precinct house – alone.'

The house on Prairie Avenue was a brick-faced, two storey building with nine steps leading up to the stoop. The neighbourhood was quiet, a backwater for commuters and professional men, with no speakeasies, no gambling dens and no alky cookers within miles, no typewriters shattering the suburban calm. Three policemen, a publisher, a draughtsman, a retired minister and the president of a clothing company owned houses in the same block.

Capone was in the kitchen when the phone rang. A white apron was tied around his paunchy middle and there was spaghetti on the hob. His wife and son were asleep, his mother, sister and two brothers in the apartment upstairs. Slippery Frank Rio sat at the scrubbed table reading the racing pages of

The Globe with a half-empty flask of chianti at his elbow.

Capone flatfooted back into the room and took a pan of Bolognese sauce off the range. 'He just left,' he said. 'Alone.'

Rio looked up. 'I never did trust the guy,' he said.

'I don't get it,' Capone complained. 'He tipped us off to that decoy auto in Cicero. That was regular. He made us a lot of dough on that crooked horse of McGrath's – and lost plenty for that mick bastard. That wasn't no bad thing neither. He come up with a smart idea on this flyin' routine – and it's workin' out fine. Then all of a sudden the deal's blown wide open by this goddamn newspaper: McGrath tries to hijack my liquor, there's shootin' out at Westwood, and the whole world can read about my private business.'

'I told you. He musta tipped them off himself. Who else could've?'

Capone scratched his head. 'It don't make sense, Frank. Why would he do a thing like that? On the other hand, why the hell would he go to Hanson Street? They can't have pulled him in for questioning: O'Mara was told to lay off Westwood. And he wasn't booked. So it looks kinda like he went there voluntary. The law bustin' him out at Howell could've been a blind, an excuse to bring him back in town and put him next to that creep Mulligan.'

'You think he's tied in with Mulligan some way?'

'I dunno. There's a leak some place. It ain't conclusive, but the evidence we have seems to point Faroli's way. Why else would one of my boys go see a flatfoot when the law's been told to lay off the deal he's workin'?' Seized by a sudden gust of rage, Capone tore the paper from Rio's hands and folded it back to the feature page displaying Mettner's column. 'Look at this!' he cried, tapping the newsprint with the back of one fat finger. 'A surefire idea, Faroli tells me. Quicker, he says. Safer, he says. *Secret*, he promises me . . . and then less than a week after it starts I read this . . . '

Holding the paper up to the light, he quoted aloud:

> 'Chicagoans going about their business have gotten used to taking a dive at the sidewalk every time the racketeers fight their private battles on the city streets. Is a new menace now to be added to the hazards of the Thompson and the sawn-off shotgun? Is death now to threaten us from the skies as well as across the roadway? You might be pardoned for thinking so if you knew that a well-known hoodlum, once a member of the notorious mob led by the late and unlamented Salvatore Sanguinetti, had just purchased a

twin-motored bombing airplane lately the property of the British air force.

'In fact we may permit ourselves a (faint) sigh of relief: the warplane, which has been debombed, is destined only for bootleg battles. To avoid the perils of the ambush and the hijack, it is being used to run in illicit cargoes of bonded liquor to an Argonne forest estate in Cook County. The property, known as Westwood, is listed as belonging to a certain Mr Al Brown, a Wabash Avenue dealer in second-hand furniture. Mr Brown's methods, however, are not so much secondhand as underhand. As is well known in vicious circles, Mr Brown is none other than that dubious pillar of the anti-dry establishment, Alphonse Scarface Capone, uncrowned emperor of the rackets and gambling supremo . . .'

Capone broke off to fling the paper on the floor. 'And a whole lot more of the same kind of shit,' he raged. 'Some fuckin' secret!'

'You want I should have this guy Mettner knocked off?' Rio asked.

The gang boss shook his head. 'Nah. With friends like Jake Lingle on the *Tribune*, we can't afford to get in bad with the newshawks. Let him be, Frank.' He shook his head again and moved back to the range.

'What about Faroli?'

Capone tipped the spaghetti into a sieve and poured boiling water over it. 'Give the guy some more rope,' he said. 'Right now I can use the service he's providin'. I have to go down to Florida tomorrow, and there's an important load of rare old French brandy to be picked up in a coupla days. I wouldn't care to risk that stuff on the road – and there's nobody else to fly the goddamn plane.'

'But if the bastard's two-timin' you, boss?'

'We don't know for sure that he is. Someone's leakin' information, and like I say it *looks* like it *might* be him.' Capone transferred the spaghetti to a heated dish and set it on the table. He poured the sauce over the creamy mess, fetched two plates, bread, butter, and a couple of forks. Then he untied the apron and sat down. 'We'll keep one hell of a close watch on the guy,' he said, 'and see which way the wind really blows.'

'And if you find he *is* crossing you up?'

'*If* he's crossing me, he knows what he can expect,' Capone said grimly. 'Eat your pasta, Frank, before it gets cold.'

10 BRUNO FARRELL

'It is the place of ripe brainless blondes with tender lips and a flowery smell . . . It is the place of violence and sudden death; of the fast shots in the night, the club of the Irish cop, and the smell of brains and blood upon the pavement; it is the place of the small-town killings, and the men who shoot the lovers of their wives; it is the place where the Negroes slash with razors and the hillmen kill in the mountain meadows; it is the place of the ugly drunks and the snarling voices and of foul-mouthed men who want to fight; it is the place of the loud word and the foolish boast and the violent threat; it is also the place of the deadly little men with white faces and the eyes of reptiles, who kill quickly and casually in the dark; it is the lawless land that feeds on murder.'

THOMAS WOLFE, *Of Time And The River*

Farrell took a snack dinner in the coffee shop of the Sherman Hotel, at Clark and Randolph in the Loop. He walked four blocks east and waited for the traffic lights to change at the Michigan Avenue intersection. It was a cool night with high clouds sailing across the stars, but the wind had dropped and so far the rain had held off. The sidewalks were crowded: homeward-bound moviegoers eddied around the lighted windows of department stores, late commuters hurried for their trains, early revellers sauntered toward their favourite speakeasies. The streets were still choked with automobiles.

Farrell crossed Randolph Street with the crowd, passed the steps of the Public Library, and plunged down the stairway that led to the pedestrian subway connecting with the Illinois Central suburban electric railroad on the far side of the avenue, in Grant Park. He was half-way along the 100ft passage when he realised that he was being tailed.

He had noticed the man before, in the lobby of the Sherman and again at the lights – a lean individual of medium height, wearing a long, dark topcoat and a fedora. Farrell hadn't seen

his face, because the man was on each occasion reading a copy of *Racing Form*, held open before his eyes. It was the newspaper he had noticed rather than the man: today's races were finished, and there would be a new edition for tomorrow's – so what could there be of such absorbing interest this late in the evening? Now, chancing to look over his shoulder in the subway, he saw the guy again, hastening through the throng still affecting to read that paper.

That did it. Concentrating on out-of-date racing news was suspicious enough; continuing the pretence when you were walking too fast to read was a dead give-away. The man didn't want to be recognised – and it looked as though Farrell was the mark he was following. The undercover man decided to check.

He walked up the ramp at the far end of the subway, bought a ticket for Washington Park, and then – as though he had time to kill before his train was due – wandered back to the avenue and stood on the edge of the sidewalk watching the traffic. Staring casually around, he lit a cigarette. The turf enthusiast was thirty feet away, his head buried in yesterday's wins.

Farrell was counting, timing the periodicity of the Michigan-Randolph stop-go lights. When he figured he had it right, he returned to the subway and strolled down the ramp. The tail followed at a discreet distance, the paper under his arm now, his collar turned up and his hat brim pulled down to hide his features. For Farrell, that clinched it. He was less interested in identifying the follower than in losing him. What he was planning to do in the next couple of hours was dangerous and secret: it was vital that he should be totally free even of the suspicion of observation.

At all costs he had to lose that tail – and be certain he was lost. If someone was interested enough to have him followed, they would pick him up again somewhere. Then he would have the time to check out the who and the why. Right now, the problem was to get lost.

There was a news-stand at the bottom of the ramp, and immediately beyond it a stairway leading back up to the east side of Michigan Avenue. Counting off the seconds in his head, Farrell paused to buy a *Herald and Examiner*, stepped out as though he was going to continue along the subway beneath the street . . . and then suddenly bolted up the steps.

He hit the sidewalk, as he hoped, just as the *Stop* semaphore clanged down and the green light glowed. Sprinting across the broad roadway to an obbligato of squealing brakes and furious klaxons, he dodged between a streetcar and a cab

to make the far side as the northbound traffic on the avenue was undammed.

A cop's whistle shrilled. Angry drivers cursed. Farrell ran southwards down the west side of the avenue, leaving the pursuer on the far sidewalk. The manoeuvre should give him between seventy and eighty seconds lead. If he could make the East Washington Street intersection before the lights changed again, he was in the clear. He heard the screech of brakes when he was still thirty yards short of the corner. Panting, he looked over his shoulder. Above the angular tonneaux of Buicks and Dodges, Fords and Jewetts, Packards and Cadillacs and Pierce-Arrows, he saw the lights at red. But the crowd was thick: even if the tail had already crossed, it should be dense enough to hide him. He turned right on Washington and pelted past Wabash Avenue to State Street. At the corner, he turned right again and ran through the window-shoppers under the flashing electric signs until he was facing the Capitol building back on Randolph. Here he waited for a full minute, regaining his breath and scanning the crowds surging northwards on State.

There was no sign of the lean man with the pulled-down fedora and the racing paper under his arm.

Farrell heaved a sigh of relief. This was one night in the year when it was essential that he should work alone. But he had to be certain. He walked on slowly, giving the pursuer time to catch up in case he *was* still somewhere in sight. He crossed Randolph and continued on to the Elevated station above the Lake Street intersection. At the top of the stairs, he looked back again. If there was the slightest doubt, he'd have to put the deal off until another night – and that would mean problems, big problems.

But there was still no sign of the thin man whose form was somehow disturbingly familiar. A college boy and a flapper climbed the stairway slowly with their arms entwined. A fat Negro woman heaved up a bundle of washing tied in a sheet. On the platform were three middle-aged couples returning to the suburbs after a night on the town. Farrell heard the rattle of an approaching train. He stayed at the stairhead until the last moment, and then jumped aboard as the doors closed. When the train pulled out of the station, the boardwalk was empty.

He rode six stops and got off at East 22nd Street. He was the only man to leave the train. Back at street level, he looked carefully at each sidewalk before he left the shelter of the stairway entrance. Even without a tail, this was the area of maximum danger: the Metropole was two blocks away on South Michigan;

the Four Deuces was even nearer, in the twenty-two-hundred block on Wabash. At any moment he might see Samoots Amatuna, Machine-gun Jack McGurn, Scalise and Anselmi, Diamond Joe Esposito, Two Gun Louis Alterie, or any other of the elite corps of killers comprising Capone's inner circle. What was crucial to the success of his plan was that they shouldn't see him . . .

Keeping close in to the walls of the buildings, he began walking east. Here in the sleazier reaches of Michigan, State and Wabash, the lights were more garish, the crowds rowdier, the blue, red and green neon signs more insistent. There was a frantic gaiety in the gunned motors and honking auto horns of the late-night traffic, a hectic determination to make whoopee in the insistent pulse of jazz music braying past suddenly-opened Judas-windows, filtering up through sidewalk gratings, pounding the electric air.

Farrell crossed Wabash Avenue and turned north up Michigan. No 2146 was an unpretentious brownstone with a rash of brass plates gleaming in the street lighting splashed across the stoop. He checked that the second floor windows were dark and hurried through a narrow cross-street to the southern extremity of Grant Park. He had at least an hour to kill before he dared to make his play, but the streets would have been too deserted, his figure too conspicuous, if he had left that vital window check to the last minute.

Under the maples lining the lake shore, he paced to and fro, chain-smoking cigarettes and taking an occasional swallow from a hip-flask of Jack Daniels. There was scarcely a ripple on the dark water. Northwards over the grumble of traffic he could hear the clanking of derricks and the clatter of a donkey engine in the floodlit port. On his right, lights garlanding the waterfront looped out in a long curve toward Calumet Harbour and the Indiana state line, their reflections swaying on the oily surface.

Farther back in the park, shop-girls from Loop department stores spread their thighs on the rear seats of lightless sedans, and there were still a few couples hunched blackly together on benches beneath the trees. A breeze shivered the reflections in the lake, stirring the water sucking at the piers, carrying with it a faint hint of music. Somewhere beyond the gaunt mass of skyscrapers bulked against the stars, Smokey would be singing. The words of the famous prohibition blues echoed in Farrell's mind:

> I'm goin' down to the river, and here's the reason why;

Goin' down to that river, baby, here's the reason why:
Because the river's wet, and Beale Street done gone dry . . .

Wind ruffled the lake again, detaching a large maple leaf which seesawed down to Farrell's feet. He pitched away his cigarette, watching the crimson reflection leap up through the water to dowse the glowing end. Then, turning up his collar, he walked briskly from the park.

There was a service alley running behind the buildings fronting the avenue. Doors set in a wall crowned with broken glass led to their backyards. Farrell paused to listen in the blackness outside 2146. A truck rumbling down the street. Cats yowling amongst the trash-cans. A shrill toot, quickly cut off, from a steamer's siren. Nearer, perhaps in an apartment overlooking the alleyway, the mellow chimes of a clock. One. Two. Three. Stripping off his topcoat, Farrell flung it over the glass teeth grinning along the wall. He took a short run, jumped for the coping, and hauled himself over.

Although he was wearing black sneakers, he seemed to himself to make a hell of a clatter as he landed in the cobbled yard. But no window was thrown up, no voice called angrily, no light streamed out to pin him against the night. He waited a moment longer and then tiptoed over to a lean-to at one side of the back porch. A pile of beer crates, a shallow, slanting roof, and then a stackpipe took him to the deep sill of a second-floor window. Kneeling there flattened against the glass, he slid a ring of slender steel instruments from his pants pocket and set to work. It would have been easier to have gone in through the back door or one of the ground-floor windows, but there might be a janitor sleeping in the back and Farrell could take no chances.

The twin wires of a burglar alarm circuit emerged through a hole bored in the wood of the window frame, crossed the embrasure, and snaked away along the brickwork. The first thing to do was to immobilise that. He scraped away the insulation with a penknife, fixed a shunt between the two leads, and then cut the wires on the inner side with a pair of miniature shears. Next in line was the window catch.

Farrell glanced over his shoulder. Blackness yawned beneath him. Between the dark shapes of two buildings on the far side of the alley, lake water gleamed under a crescent moon rising above a cloudbank in the east. He would have to be inside that window before the wan light silvered the façade of the house.

Three minutes later there was a loud click and he snapped off the torch. Carefully, he eased up the sash and dropped

down into the hallway beyond. There was a faint illumination coming from the stairhead. He crept along and peered cautiously over the rail. A man with a shotgun across his knees dozed in a chair tipped back against the wall at the bottom of the stairwell. Thank Christ he hadn't chanced an entry on the lower floor!

Farrell inched his way back to a door half-way along the hallway. The thin beam of his flashlight played over the lettered words *Dr A. Brown, MD.* He grinned. He had walked through that doorway five times already – although the consultations he'd had were practical rather than physiological. Those visits had been legitimate. This one was strictly clandestine – and it was the good doctor who was being diagnosed and not the patient! For behind that door was the kingdom of Jake Greasy Thumbs Guzik, paymaster-in-chief of the Capone empire and financial wizard of the Syndicate operations in Chicago.

There were three locks on the door. The first one yielded to the second pick-lock that Farrell tried. The tongue of the Yale above it could be pushed back with a piece of stiff celluloid. But before that there was a heavy mortise, low on the jamb, that had to be mastered. It took him ten minutes of sweating, dry-mouthed effort, six hundred seconds of stealthy, heart-thumping, silent concentration before he heard the oiled tumblers fall under his probing instrument. Rising to his feet, he opened the door and stole inside.

The anteroom was a typical physician's reception area – a worn desk with a manual telephone switchboard, chairs ranged around the walls, a central table stacked with out-of-date magazines. Behind the desk, rows of shelves fixed to the wall held druggist's bottles of every size filled with liquids varying in colour from amber to dark green, from the palest gold to deep mahogany. Far from being Dr Brown's private pharmacopoeia, Farrell knew, these contained samples of every liquor supplied by the Capone organisation – samples which clients were encouraged to take away for analysis (though there was no proof that the bulk supplies would correspond with the fluid in the bottles). The medical front in fact camouflaged the shop window of the entire Syndicate bootleg operation. In the offices beyond the reception room, a clerical staff of twenty-five operated an auditing system charting the sixty million-dollar yearly turnover, complete with the day books, cost accounts, card indexes and loose-leaf ledgers. The private sanctum of the man masterminding this supposedly illegal near-monopoly housed a row of steel filing cabinets containing the documents Farrell wanted to examine. Guzik had consulted them each time the undercover

man called by to check out his Canadian flights. Drawing the heavy drapes, Farrell switched on a desk light and set to work.

From the pocket of his jacket, he took a miniature camera developed by the Kodak company for the FBI. It was set up on a tiny lightweight telescopic tripod designed to hold it steady for the time exposure of papers and documents. Farrell arranged the apparatus under the lamp and then started on the locks of the filing cabinets. Working quickly and methodically, he went through the folders in each heavy drawer, photographing every item he thought Stevens could use as he came to it, and then replaced the paper in the file.

Two hours later he had recorded the details of all Chicago saloons, hotels and drugstores buying the syndicate's liquor, the names of all policemen and prohibition agents on the organisation's $30,000 weekly payroll, and the management accounts of four large breweries producing the bulk of the city's illicit beer. In addition he photographed a list of over 200 prominent citizens who were personal clients, a resumé of the cost system used in Capone brothels, and a coded account of the channels – including his own – through which booze was run in from Canada, Miami, New Orleans, and Rum Row off New York city harbour. Most important of all, there was an accountant's breakdown of net profits paid to named members of the organisation – including a Mr Al Brown of Prairie Avenue, in the Grand Crossings district of the South Side. A cash book recorded the numbered accounts in private banks to which Mr Brown's six-figure weekly rake-off was regularly transferred.

Farrell had worked with growing excitement. A few months ago, he knew, reluctant police had raided Guzik's office on the insistence of Mayor Dever and removed many of these documents. Both the Federal authorities and customs officials in New Orleans had put in an immediate request for sight of the damning papers – but it was ignored. Municipal Judge Howard Hayes had impounded them the day after the raid. He convened a special hearing without any formal notification and handed them back to the Syndicate before the Feds could inspect them or transcripts could be made. Now, with Farrell's photos as evidence, Stevens and his men should be able to override the corrupt local administration and step in again.

When the undercover man had exposed all twenty-four frames on his miniature roll of high-sensitivity film, he relocked the cabinets, dismantled the apparatus and stowed it back in his pockets. He switched off the light, drew back the drapes, and tiptoed out of the office. Through the windows of the reception room, grey dawn light seeped over table, chairs

and the liquor bottles ranked behind the desk. Farrell moved silently toward the entrance door.

This was one job he would be thankful to see finished. Capone had been angry when Farrell phoned him the day before – furious at the publicity which had blown the booze airlift wide open, outraged at the attack on Westwood. His manner had been accusing and suspicious. Clearly he felt Farrell was in some way to blame. And since Farrell had seen enough on his visits to Guzik to know his way around the office, he had figured it better to get the thing over with while Capone was in Florida, before his stock sank any lower in the Big Guy's books. He gave a final look around the room: he must leave no sign of his visit, for his orders were to stick around on the Capone payroll until the IRS people had seen the film. They might want a second bite at the cherry if the material wasn't comprehensive enough. 'I should be so lucky!' Farrell thought as he turned the handle. He opened the door.

The man was standing at the stairhead, silhouetted against the light filtering up the well from the entrance lobby – a craggy six-footer with a face collapsed so much around the cheekbones that it seemed the skull was outside the skin. He had left the shotgun below but there was a revolver in his huge fist.

Fractionally, Farrell had the advantage of surprise: all his senses were on the alert whereas the guard had perhaps only mounted the stairway to make a routine check. To balance that, the undercover man's Mauser was holstered under his left arm. But there was a Police Special in the sagging pocket of his coat. His right hand streaked down as he accelerated the step he had made into the hallway and hurled himself against the opposite wall.

The two guns roared together in a single deafening explosion.

Farrell felt a sudden agony sear his left side. The mouth of the death's-head gorilla fell open. Blood frothed over his chin. The slug Farrell fired through his pocket had smashed into the man's chest. His gun thumped to the floor. His knees buckled. For an instant he hung against the light, supported on invisible wires. The wires snapped. Very slowly, he careened over backwards . . . then abruptly he plunged from sight, tumbling down the flight of stairs with a clatter that shook the house.

Farrell leaned against the wall, panting for breath. His ears were still singing after the thunderclap of the twin detonations. Cordite fumes stung the membranes of his nose. He pushed himself upright, listening.

It was unlikely that Capone would permit any other tenants

in the building housing the secrets of his bootleg operations, but there might be another guard . . . someone on one of the upper floors . . . Farrell held his breath, straining his ears.

Silence.

Trucks rumbled along the avenue outside. A streetcar clanged past, carrying early workers to the stockyards. Somewhere behind him, water dripped from a leaky faucet. If there was anyone, he was minding his business.

He was aware suddenly of wetness and warmth along his left side. His ribs were smarting like hell and his shirt stuck to his skin. All at once he felt deathly cold. Cautiously, he unbuttoned his jacket. The bullet had passed between his arm and his body, slicing through jacket, vest and shirt to score the flesh outside of his left nipple. The flesh was raw, but there was only a thin trickle of blood oozing from one end of the wound. It was no more than a graze, luckily: a couple of inches to the right, and it would have been curtains! He would fix it later. Right now, fast thinking was the order.

Farrell walked to the stairhead and looked over the rail. The guard lay crumpled at the foot of the flight. If Farrell's bullet hadn't killed him, the fall had. His shattered chest, propped against the lowest step, had smeared a gory parabola down the wall, and his bloodied, skeletal head lolled at an impossible angle on his shoulders. Evidently his neck was broken.

The undercover man's mind raced. The plan had been to leave no sign of his entry, but with a dead man in the lobby the blueprint had to be altered. The best thing would be to make it look like a small time burglary – some amateur second-storey man, surprised in an attempt to lift easy money out of the Big Guy's offices, who'd fired first and then taken it on the lam.

Farrell's topcoat, still draped over the glass on top of the wall in back, was unidentifiable. He'd leave it there as a clue. They'd soon suss out the doctored burglar alarm and the forced window at the end of the hallway if he left them the way they were too. All he needed to do was fake up a little corroborative evidence inside. Carefully, he relocked the door to the reception room. He repicked the first lock, making sure there were scratches around the keyhole, sprung the Yale with his celluloid, which he then dropped to the floor, and produced from a special pocket sewn into his pants leg a short steel jimmy. This he inserted between door and frame at the level of the mortice. The crude operator whose trail he was blazing would not have had sufficiently sophisticated instruments to master that kind of lock!

Sweating, he leaned his weight on the jimmy. The doorpost split with a splintering crack that echoed down the empty hall-

way. Farrell kicked open the door with the tongue of the lock still protruding and went back inside. He remembered that he had seen a black japanned cash-box on Guzik's desk. He jimmied that open too and dumped the contents on the blotter. From the pile of vouchers, receipts and small change, he removed a bundle of almost fifteen hundred dollars in used tens, twenties and hundreds, which he stuffed into the breast pocket of his jacket. That would give his mythical cracksman enough reason for the break-in . . . plus it would come in useful if Farrell himself wanted to keep up the front of a big spender around the gambling joints in town.

He looked around the office. The filing cabinets? No. Better let the bosses think the man had been disturbed before he'd gotten around to them. The last thing he wanted to do was raise suspicions in that direction. He contented himself with forcing open a couple of drawers from the desk and strewing their contents on the floor. Finally he went back to the hallway window he had forced open, pulled his shirt out from the waistband of his pants, and squeezed a couple of drops of blood from his flesh wound on to the white painted sill. They would think the thief had escaped the way he had come in, although in fact at this hour of the morning it would be perfectly safe for Farrell himself to leave by the front door.

Following the sound of the leaky faucet, he found a washroom at the far end of the hallway. Here he soaked a handkerchief in cold water and cleaned up the graze as best he could. Two minutes later he let himself out of the street door and hurried down the steps into Michigan Avenue.

Farrell was cold without his topcoat. It was a raw morning with a hint of moisture in the air. As the sky paled over the tall buildings, the breeze freshened, blowing scraps of paper and dead leaves around his feet each time he crossed a side street leading to the lake. There was sand behind his eyes, the crease in his side was throbbing painfully, and the skin of his face felt as though it was a size too small for his skull. The hell with it, he thought, you're just identifying with the guy at the foot of the stairs back there. Fearless Farrell, scourge of the hoods – the undercover man with the soft centre. Two-gun Farrell, intrepid adventurer, the photographer of other men's books whose personal account was now two deaths in the red. He shivered. I just walked over somebody's grave, he thought.

He walked across the town to La Salle Street station. Workers were already streaming out of the exits to board the streetcars that would take them to the North Side factories and mills and refineries. Six more blocks and he would be at Smokey's apartment. Hurrying northwards along La Salle, he

imagined the touch of her flesh, the warmth of her sleepy body . . . and the chill of the stiffening corpse behind the door of 2146 South Michigan Avenue.

Smokey was in the back seat of a Hupmobile sedan parked outside the apartment house. McGrath sat beside her, holding the door open with one hand. The gun in the other was pointing straight at Farrell's belly. The red-haired hood was at the wheel, and the gorilla at his side had swivelled around in his seat to look out of the open door. There was a gun in his hand too.

'Step inside, fella,' McGrath said pleasantly. 'You kept us waitin' a hell of a time, but there's a little matter I'd like to discuss with you.'

11 SMOKEY HERNANDEZ

'Amory saw girls doing things that even in his memory would have been impossible: eating three o'clock, after-dance suppers at impossible cafés, talking of every side of life with an air half of earnestness, half of mockery, yet with a furtive excitement that Amory considered stood for a real moral letdown. But he never realised how widespread it was until he saw the cities between New York and Chicago as one vast juvenile intrigue . . . The crowd whirled and changed and shifted. They were mostly from the colleges, with a scattering of the male refuse of Broadway, and women of two types, the higher of which was the chorus girl. About three-fourths of the whole business was for effect and therefore harmless . . . about one-fourth continued on into the dimmer hours and gathered strange dust from strange places.'

SCOTT FITZGERALD, *This Side of Paradise*

The Embassy was a black-and-tan joint just south of the Chicago River on North La Salle. The red awning stretched over the sidewalk from its plate-glass doors stood out among the pawnshops, flophouses, burlesques and cheap hotels lining the street like a pearl tiepin on a cottonpicker.

Inside, there were concentric half circles of tables grouped on two levels around a dance-floor in front of the bandstand. The stand was framed in crimson velvet drapes, and there was red plush and gilt mirror glass all over. Beneath the gallery at the back was a soda fountain. You bought your liquor from the hat-check girl.

The place was popular with college students and the kids from Austin High and the other North Side schools because it looked ritzy, it wasn't too expensive, and the music was measured, shaken and poured out by a seven-piece Creole group from Memphis that really wailed. Smokey enjoyed singing there because the crowd were enthusiastic. Sure, they got high and they were noisy – but they did actually listen to what the musicians were doing, and Smokey had been around

musicians long enough to appreciate that on their behalf. The kids dug the words of the songs too, instead of yakking all the way through like the usual speakeasy layabouts, and that was good.

The band was worth a listen. They played in the Memphis style – neat, economic head arrangements for the first and last chorus, with a string of solos in between; each voice sharp and distinct in the ensembles, every man treading his own path, keeping away from the others, but all going in the same direction. 'Jammin's okay for after hours, when there ain't nobody listenin' but the guys,' Doc Lachaise said, 'but it's kind of messy when there's people out there has *paid* to listen. I reckon they have a right to hear each man do his thing – but in a framework that's been thought out before. That makes 'em listen harder, and when they do – why, them cats up here on the stand just naturally *stretch* themselves a mite more.'

Doc was the leader. He'd been born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, all of sixty years ago, and learned his horn the hard way, blowing for street parades and funerals in New Orleans. By the time he was twenty he was playing second trumpet with Bolden. Then he'd started on the Mississippi stern-wheelers, finally settling in Memphis, where he'd stayed until he came to the Windy City in '23.

He was a hard man to work for but he knew what he wanted and the results showed. They swung like crazy but it was quality merchandise too. Like they didn't play *Yacki-hula Hicky-dula* but once in six weeks, and they got the changes right in *I'm Coming, Virginia* instead of taking the easy way out.

It was a pretty versatile band. Pete Pintadou, the alto man, was making a name for himself as one of the hottest cats in town – but he could pour on the syrup if it was needed, and his spare, tersely phrased comments between the lines of Smokey's songs were a joy. The trombone player was Andy Thomson. Like all trombone players, he was a comedy vocalist, an arrogant bastard when it came to discussing chord sequences, a practical joker, and a lush. The four-piece rhythm section was steady and unobtrusive. But solid. You'd of missed it if it wasn't there.

There was a regular vocalist with the group – a fat black chick from Chattanooga, Tennessee, who took the mickey out of that year's romantic hits whenever Doc allowed them on stage – and a close-harmony trio as well as Smokey. Smokey did three spots somewhere between midnight and 4am, according to Doc's mood.

She was on when McGrath's team blew in that night, standing on an apron that slid out over the dance-floor from beneath

the stage. She was swathed from throat to ankle in flamingo-coloured crêpe-de-chine and there were ostrich feathers around her neck. The guy who was operating the solo lime slid in a blue gelatine: Smokey swayed suddenly purple in the layers of cigarette smoke weaving through the cone of light, stringing together a set of blues couplets borrowed from here and there while the band leaned their heads together behind her and growled out a sixteen-bar theme. She sang:

Trouble in mind, well I'm blue
But I won't be blue always
'Cause the sun's gonna shine in
To my back door some day . . .

Pete Pintadou's bald head bobbed up alongside her. Leaning back from the hips with his eyes screwed shut, he shook four bars from the alto that pierced through you like the cry of a lost child. Lachaise picked up the last phrase in the darkness behind, examined it, turned it upside down, and handed it on to Andy Thomson, who wrapped it up and gave it back to Pete for the last four. The kids were standing six deep around the apron, moving slightly with the beat like plants under water. Smokey sang:

How long, oh how long
Has that evenin' train been gone?
How long? Just how long?
Oh, baby, how long?

Now I can hear a whistle blowin'
But I cannot see no train.
How long? Daddy, how long?
Oh, tell me how long?

The alto had been building behind her voice, crying in between the lines, pleading for a hearing. They let him take the whole sixteen bars this time, the staccato phrases, dead on the beat, sobbing in the violet light. Somewhere in the middle, Smokey was aware of raised voices at the back of the hall. She paid them no mind; maybe a drunk had gotten on the wrong side of the bouncers. There was a big globe covered with lozenges of coloured glass hanging from the domed roof among the chandeliers. The technician handling the electrics set this spinning and trained a spot on it, so that small patches of reflected light, red and blue and purple and green, swung giddily around the darkened room and over the rapt faces around the

stand. The operator switched Smokey's lime to gold, transforming the flamingo dress into the darkest of saffrons.

There was a piano solo, a chorus from Doc using a plunger mute, and then an ensemble passage as they modulated to the twelve-bar sequence. Now there was definitely some kind of a fight going on around the entrance. Hoarse voices shouted. Feet stamped. Heads around the bandstand turned. Before they flared into the ride-out, Smokey belted out the traditional farewell couplet:

> Now if anybody ask you, who was it sang this song?
> You tell 'em ole Smokey, she's been here and gone.

The applause at the end of the number was drowned by the shout-up at the far end of the hall. Cutting through the hubbub, the voice of Abe Riccardo, the manager, yelled: 'Now get outa here, you motherfuckers! You know damned well this is a Capone house. We sell Syndicate liquor and there ain't no North Side bums gonna make us do any different.'

Then McGrath's unmistakable brogue: 'I'm tellin' you Riccardo: this is my territory. You take my goddamn liquor or else!'

'Nuts! Now beat it, mick, before Capone and Torrio and the Gennas – '

'The hell with them Sicilians! You're gonna take American beer and like it!' the Irishman shouted. There was a sudden stampede of heavy feet. The sound of blows and cries of pain. A vivid orange flash split the gloom; a shotgun roared over the heads of the crowd. The great mirrored ball, blasted from its pendant supports, plummeted to the floor like a gigantic crystal bird. Men and women screamed and scattered as it exploded in a hail of coloured shrapnel.

Three men cradling Thompson submachine-guns strode down the centre of the hall. 'All right, over there all of you!' one of them shouted. 'Move over to that wall and stow your gab if you don't wanna get hurt!' Fearfully, the crowd backed away, leaving one boy face downwards amidst the wreckage of the shattered globe. Several of them had cuts on faces and hands. A middle-aged man sat on the edge of the apron with blood streaming through the fingers clapped over his eyes. A girl whose bare back was criss-crossed with scarlet cried hysterically. The lights went up.

Smokey cowered against the drapes at the edge of the stage. Now that the floor had cleared she could see the fight still going on at the far end of the room. Two thugs held Abe Riccardo down, bent backwards over the hat-check counter

while a third pounded the butt of a shotgun again and again into his unprotected belly. One of the bouncers was backed up against a wall, trading punches with two hoods armed with blackjacks. The other was unconscious on the ground, his head and body jerking under a barrage of kicks aimed by the two men who had beaten her up at the racecourse.

She looked over her shoulder. Doc Lachaise and his musicians must have worked out a routine for this kind of situation. The stand was empty. At the sound of the shot they had vanished backstage to a man – drums, instruments, music desks and all. Only the untenanted piano witnessed the fact that jazz had been jumping there minutes before.

By the entrance, the defenders' resistance was almost over. Riccardo was grovelling on the floor in a pool of blood, retching horribly. One of the hoods who had been holding him jumped to the soda fountain, seized a selter bottle by the neck, and smashed it over the bar. Advancing on the remaining bouncer, who was fighting a losing battle against the blackjacks, he pushed his way between his two companions, thrust the jagged ends into the man's face, and twisted viciously. The bouncer dropped to the floor, clawing at his eyes, and rolled down the entrance steps.

McGrath was standing near the hat-check counter, his coat draped over his shoulders, his hat on the back of his head. He was smiling. 'All right, boys,' he called. 'You can work the place over now.'

The hoods – there were seven of them, Smokey saw, apart from the three men covering the terrified dancers – began methodically to wreck the joint. They broke up the gilt chairs, overturned tables, slit upholstery, blasted the chandeliers with shotguns, and fired Thompsons at the liquor bottles stored in Riccardo's office. Finally they started smashing the mirrors around the walls. When there was only one left, McGrath stopped them. The place looked like it had been at the epicentre of an earthquake.

He went up to a girl who was nervously retouching her lips, and snatched the lipstick from her trembling hand. With the carmine greasepaint, he scrawled on the last mirror: *NEXT TIME, BUY McGRATH BEER.* Then, tossing the make-up back to the girl, he advanced on the stage.

The red-haired thug and the gorilla who'd savaged Smokey before fell in behind him. Like the other roughnecks who had broken up the place, they were coarser, cruder, more obviously brutal than the taciturn, blue-chinned Syndicate *mafiosi* and the smooth-voiced Capone killers she met with Faroli. Smokey swallowed, trying to choke back the fear that constricted her

throat. 'All right, baby,' McGrath said. 'We're pullin' out now – and you're comin' with us.' She shrank away from the odour of his breath.

'What do you guys want with me?' she said defiantly. 'I'm just a singer. I only work here.'

McGrath nodded, showing the mortuary between his lips. 'Sure. But you got a boyfriend. There's a little matter I'd like to discuss with him, and I reckon he'd feel more comfortable if there was pleasant company around.'

'You'll have to let me get my wrap,' she said desperately. 'It's . . . it's cold outside.' Maybe from the window of her dressing-room she could jump down into the alley . . . ?

'That'll be okay,' McGrath said. 'We was leavin' the back way in any case.' He turned and called to the other hoods: 'Keep these birds here another five minutes, and then beat it. If you get bored, sure you can work over Riccardo a little more.'

Hustled out by the gang leader and his two torpedoes, Smokey was shivering despite the wrap as she got into the back of the Hupmobile. The shorter and wider of the two men – his name was Red Radzhinski, she learned – got behind the wheel. The gorilla sat beside him, chewing noisily. They drove the few blocks to her apartment and parked outside, waiting for Faroli.

Before he arrived, Smokey was anticipating a one-way ride for both of them, or at least a merciless beating. But once Faroli had been forced into the car at gunpoint, she began to have second thoughts. Although there was always an underlying menace to his words, McGrath's manner became almost genial. He would say nothing of the purpose behind the dual kidnap except to repeat that there was something he wanted to discuss. But what that was he refused to reveal. He kept up a spirited conversation with Radzhinski on the subject of horse racing, trying to coax his two prisoners to join in. Faroli said nothing, staring stonily ahead as they crossed the river and headed northeast against the increasing flow of traffic streaming downtown. The gorilla, referred to simply as Homer, went on chewing.

After half an hour, the sedan turned in through a gateway on the outskirts of Des Plaines and stopped under the portico of a large, gloomy, nineteenth-century house with a pepper-pot turret at one corner. There were two tourers already parked on the gravelled driveway, and guards outside the front door. Most of the men who had been at the Embassy were lounging about in the entrance lobby.

Smokey and Faroli were taken upstairs to a sombre, overfurnished room with lace antimacassars garnishing the cut-moquette easy chairs, a glass case of stuffed birds in one corner,

and Victorian engravings entitled 'Forgiveness' and 'A Billet-Doux' on the walls. A polished bronze crucifix hung above the chimney piece. Homer and Radzhinski frisked Faroli and laid the contents of his pockets on a table covered by a green baize cloth with bobbles around the edge. 'Well now, there's a fine collection!' McGrath exclaimed. 'A Mauser, a Police Special, a jimmy and a set of twirls! And what have we here at-all? A miniature camera and a tripod! Now what villiany would a fella be up to with all that equipment, tell me that?'

Faroli said nothing. McGrath opened the back of the camera and took out the spool of exposed film. 'Just at a guess – only a guess, mind – I'd say that a fella providin' himself with this particular set of equipment would be after breakin' in someplace, wouldn't you?' McGrath's small, almost lashless eyes stared quizzically at the undercover man. 'A burglarious entry, no less. Perhaps a dangerous one, judgin' by the shootin' irons. With the object of what? Liftin' property? I doubt not, seein' as there's none on your person. There is a camera, though. And the film's been shot. Now what d'you think we can deduce from that?' He looked questioningly around the room.

'Search me, boss,' Homer said in a rasping voice.

'Pictures,' Radzhinski offered. 'He bust in someplace to take pix.'

'Ah!' McGrath's pale eyebrows rose. 'He risked a dangerous break-in to photograph something. What could that be, at-all? Documents, d'you think?'

Homer shrugged his huge shoulders. 'Letters,' Radzhinski said. 'He was aimin' to put the bite on someone, that's what.'

'Maybe you got something there, Red. They say it's an ugly word, Faroli, but I smell blackmail. Who were you goin' to shake down, an' for what, my bucko?'

Faroli remained silent, staring impassively at the Irish gang boss.

'Never mind,' McGrath said lightly. 'I'll have the roll processed, sure. Then I can see for myself, and perhaps we can share the pickin's.' He opened the top drawer of a walnut bureau and dropped the spool inside. 'After all, there should be no secrets when fellas are goin' to work together.'

'Work together?' Faroli spoke for the first time. 'Me an' you?'

'Certainly.'

'You musta gone loco, McGrath. You're outa your mind. Why the hell should I – ?'

'Because you're an intelligent man,' the Irishman cut in swiftly. 'Because you work where the money's thickest on the ground, like every other freelance triggerman in this town.

That's why. It's only those goddamn Sicilians have no choice – an' you can't tell me you're really one of those.'

'So where *is* the money thickest on the ground?' Faroli asked.

'With me, boy, in this particular case. What's Capone payin' you? A grand?'

'Two. Plus a percentage. You ought to get them teeth fixed, McGrath.'

'I'll make it two and a half. With a bigger percentage.'

'Just what did you have in mind?' Faroli's voice, which had been dismissive, almost contemptuous, was now tinged with a faint interest.

'Wait'll I tell you. That was a smart idea, startin' an air freight service for the booze. Too smart for them bums you're workin' with. I figure it'd sit better this side of town. Now that Weiss has gone, I'm workin' with Drucci and Moran. I chewed it over with them an' they agree.'

'Meanin'?'

'Meaning you got brains and you fly that ship well – so come in with us where the rest of the brains are. If it goes well, we'll open the deal up, run a fleet of ships in and out of that race-track of mine. You can handle the whole operation for us. Meanwhile, like I say, I'm offerin' two and a half – plus twice whatever percentage Capone pays you.'

'In advance?'

'Be your age, Faroli! You may think I'm crazy, but I ain't that crazy!'

'Starting as of when?'

'As of now. I got contacts in Canada too, and I hear tell there's a special order of rare French brandy due to be picked up somewhere near Quebec tomorrow night. Me, I go for a good brandy. Especially French. I'm sayin' you should collect that liquor as per – but make a forced landin' out on that track like you did before. Only this time you get a warmer welcome. And you stay.'

'Or else?'

McGrath's smile was not noticeably amused. 'To tell the truth,' he said, 'the idea of an alternative hadn't occurred to me. But I dare say I could dream one up if you want.'

There was a lot more of it. Smokey lost interest in the details, the proposals and counter-proposals, the safeguards against double-crossing demanded by men driven by the obsession for a fast buck yet instinctively distrusting one another. But in the end – to her surprise and, if she was honest, to her disappointment – the deal was closed. Faroli, to put it crudely, agreed to betray Capone and divert his brandy shipment to McGrath in return for an extra $500 a week and an increased percentage

of the profits. McGrath agreed to pay him $1000 in advance – but he insisted on retaining the spool of film taken from Faroli's camera. 'Sure it's only a hunch,' he said, 'but I've an idea those photos might be of some value – so they'll be kind of a surety, see. An insurance against a forced-landing in the wrong place!'

Red Radzhinski drove them to a neighbourhood shopping centre where they could pick up a cab. Faroli was unwilling to be seen downtown with a McGrath driver, even that early in the day. It could tip someone off, he said, and bitch up the whole deal before it started. When they were alone, Smokey turned to him and said: 'Bruno, you're crazy!'

His agate eyes stared at her over an unlit cigarette. 'Crazy?'

'Fixing to cross the Big Guy. Even if there's no leak this end, the whole town'll be wise to the switch an hour after you touch down at that track. And what do you think he'll do? Put you on the spot! Honey, I'm scared.'

'Relax, baby,' Faroli said. 'I know what I'm doing. I can take care of myself.'

'Not when it's one guy against seven hundred, you can't. That's the strength of his mob, Bruno. Seven hundred! You wouldn't last an hour.'

'Just let me do it my way, willya?' Faroli said. The taxi pulled up at the corner. He paid off the cabbie, and they walked the half block to Smokey's apartment. Fifty yards along the street there was an advertising hoarding. Among the bills announcing prize fights, movies, theatres and race meetings, there was a yellow and red poster giving the information that Sir Lyn Duffield and his Daredevil Aeronautical Circus would be performing amazing feats of aerial skill that week at Altaville Racecourse, Des Plaines. Smokey smiled. 'Home from home!' she said, slipping her arm through Faroli's.

He drew sharply, involuntarily, away from her. She had noticed it before: a couple of times in McGrath's car and once in the cab he had flinched and moved away when she touched him. She stopped and turned to face him, her eyes stormy. 'Maybe I should have stayed home, at that,' she said. 'Maybe Capone isn't the only one you plan to leave.'

'Baby . . . '

'I mean, you don't *have* to come home with me if you find it such a drag to touch me. Come to think of it, I'm not so sure I want to share my bed with a guy who switches sides so easily. I don't go too strong on four-flushers.'

Faroli laughed.

'Very funny,' Smokey said angrily. 'I suppose you think – '

'Baby,' he interrupted. 'I was workin' last night. I got plugged

in the side. It's only a scratch, but it's kinda sore.'

She stared at him open mouthed. 'But? Why didn't you . . . ? Oh, Bruno! You're hurt!'

'I told you. It's nothing. You can fix it with a little carbolic and a strip of plaster. As for the other thing – talk sense. You don't think I'd really be sap enough to go through with it, do you? With those seven hundred guys after my head? I'm gonna wise Capone up to the whole deal, and ask him what he wants me to make of it, that's what. Maybe he can use a guy on the inside with McGrath; maybe he'll tell me to forget it. I don't know.'

She was crying. 'You big galoot,' she sobbed. 'You wouldn't try and frighten a girl, would you? Honey, why did you do it? Why did you say you'd do it?'

'Can you think of a better way of gettin' out of McGrath's place in one piece?' Faroli asked.

The roadster which had been tailing them ever since he first got into McGrath's Hupmobile slid to a halt a hundred yards behind.

12 BRUNO FARRELL, AL CAPONE

'They'll kill him.'

'I guess they will.'

'He must have got mixed up in something in Chicago.'

'I guess so,' said Nick.

'It's a hell of a thing.'

'It's an awful thing,' Nick said.

They did not say anything. George reached down for a towel and wiped the counter.

'I wonder what he did?' Nick said.

'Double-crossed somebody. That's what they kill them for.'

'I'm going to get out of this town,' Nick said.

'Yes,' said George, 'that's a good thing to do.'

'I can't stand to think about him waiting in the room and knowing he's going to get it. It's too damned awful.'

'Well,' said George, 'you better not think about it.'

ERNEST HEMINGWAY, *The Killers*

Farrell was far less happy about his entanglement with McGrath than he had led Smokey to believe. Because he knew that, one way or another, it would stir up the booze war, he had pretended to accept the Irishman's offer. But it left him in the shit both ways: if he went through with it, Capone would put him on the spot and his life wouldn't be worth a nickel. If he didn't arrive at the racetrack with the brandy, McGrath would be after his blood. Worse, McGrath still had the spool of film. Farrell hadn't dared make more of a performance out of that because he wanted to play down its importance to him. Nevertheless, once McGrath had developed it and seen the blow-ups, he'd realise at once their significance. And, Farrell knew, there was one surefire way he could make use of them: to embarrass his hated rival, Capone, he would hand them over to Mulligan.

Being an honest cop who played by the book of rules, Mulligan would pass them on to his superior, Captain O'Mara.

And O'Mara, since he was on Capone's payroll, would inevitably hand them back to the Syndicate chief . . . with the full

story of how he'd got them, where they'd come from, and who'd taken them.

Farrell would be fingered as the killer of the guard and the burglar of Guzik's office. He would be tied in with McGrath. Worst of all, his cover would be blown for ever.

So whatever happened, Capone would be after him . . . unless he got that spool of film back before it had been processed.

Today was Sunday. It was therefore improbable that the Irishman would – or could – do anything about it until tomorrow: it was hardly likely that he would have a tame photo technician on the premises. In other words, Farrell had somehow to break into McGrath's stronghold and recover the damning strip of celluloid within the next few hours.

The only trouble was, he should be taking off for Quebec within the next few hours. And there was no excuse he could think of that would be strong enough to justify postponing the flight. It was an important consignment, Capone was relying on it, and he was already mad enough at Farrell to make any such manoeuvre dangerous. Lying in Smokey's bed, the undercover man wrestled vainly with the problem. First, he must call Capone and tip him off that McGrath had made his play. He would tell the Big Guy that he had been forced to make a pretence of going along with the idea . . . and ask for further instructions. That should be no sweat. What was killing him was the headache of how to be flying a plane to Canada and burgling McGrath's house at the same time.

Smokey pressed the warm, fleshy length of her body against him. He could feel the weight of one of her breasts against the hairs on his chest, the thudding of her heart against his own ribs. 'What's biting you, lover?' she said. 'This ain't the Bruno I know and love. Where's the all-dancing, all-singing, all-screwing he-man I was with yesterday?'

'I'm sorry, baby.' Farrell was staring at the ceiling. A narrow strip of reflected sunlight lengthened and shortened as the breeze stirred the drapes. He tightened his arm around her shoulders. 'I got troubles.'

'It's all right. Just so long as I know what's wrong. Is that goddamn crease in your side playing up?'

His fingertips touched the rough surface of the adhesive dressing she had fixed. He shook his head. 'Uh-uh. It's fine. It throbs some, but it's fine. You did a good job there, baby.'

'Well, what is it? Tell mama.'

Farrell reached over to the night table for a cigarette. Being unable to confide in anyone – anyone at all – was one of the toughest parts of his double life. But he dare not trust anybody with his secret, not even Smokey. Especially not Smokey, for if

she knew she herself would be in danger. Yet he had to find a way out – and for that, some way or another, he was going to need help. Who else could he go to but the girl at his side?

He put the cigarette between his lips and struck a match one-handed. That was him: single-handed Farrell, the man who worked in the dark. So much in the dark, he didn't know where the hell he was at. 'It's a matter of timin',' he said carefully. 'I gotta be in two places at once, and they're both . . . well, you could say vital.'

'Can I help?'

Farrell blew smoke at the bar of sunlight. Could she help? She knew nothing about the spool of film or where he had shot it. She'd no idea how important to him it was. She was a good girl: she hadn't asked. Could he lay the problem on her in general terms – and still reveal nothing of the rôle that the goddamn spool played in his own plans? He thought perhaps he could. The cigarette smoke landed smack on the target and flattened out across the ceiling. 'It's like this,' he said. 'That roll of pictures McGrath took off me – it ain't really my property. And the guy it belongs to, his ass is goin' to be in one hell of a sling if McGrath ever sees them photos. So I gotta bust into his place and get 'em back before they're processed. Which means like tonight.'

'And tonight . . . ?'

'Tonight I'm supposed to be flyin' the crate to Quebec to pick up a very special consignment for Capone.'

Smokey said: 'That's no problem. I'll fly the plane for you.'

Women! Farrell thought. Straight to the point with the simple, straightforward answer! Who said guys were the practical ones? And she didn't even ask what was on the roll! Aloud, he said: 'Gee, that'd be swell, baby. You really think you could?'

'Sure I could. The Embassy's but wrecked. Ain't nobody gonna be there to listen to me singing tonight. It'll take 'em a week, ten days, to fix the place up, and that's for sure.'

'Okay. But I mean – can you handle her?'

'That ole crate? You're kiddin'. I ferried her half across Australia for Duffield. Flew in the dog-fight routine a coupla times when one of the guys was sick. Of course I can handle her.'

'Smokey,' Farrell said feelingly, 'where have you been all my life?'

'It's where I'm at now that matters, lover,' Smokey said. She leaned over and plucked the cigarette from between his fingers, mashing out the stub in an ashtray. Her hand dived beneath the covers.

'There didn't ought to be no problem. Blackfingers would be

with you. He's a good little guy. He knows the routine, he knows the fields. The fuel stop's already laid on.'

'Sure,' Smokey said. 'Sure, honey, sure.'

'It's just a matter of taking her there, putting her down where Blackfingers says, waiting for them to load her up, and then flying back to Westwood . . . Jesus, baby! . . . I'll fill you in on the details later. Soon as I've called Capone, we can – Christ! I'm not gonna lie here and let you – ' Farrell struggled to raise himself on one elbow.

'Relax, darlin',' Smokey's husky voice murmured in his ear. 'You just lie there and relax. You're a wounded guy, remember? You just lay back and leave this to me . . . '

Much later, when Farrell tried to contact Capone, he found the gang boss was still in Florida and the long-distance lines were all busy, so he had to let Smokey leave for Quebec before he'd had the chance to confess his pretended acceptance of McGrath's offer.

'It was the damnedest thing,' Capone said. 'I called in at Escanaba, on Lake Michigan, before I came down here. Coupla business matters I had to discuss with the boys who run the stuff across the water in launches. And whaddya know – there was this limey outfit puttin' on an air circus in town!'

'We got enough circus material in the air ourselves, without any help from the motherfuckin' limeys,' Frank Rio grunted. They were sitting under striped umbrellas by the pool at Capone's Palm Island estate. Beyond an oleander hedge, the ocean stretched past millionaires' weekend love nests to the cardboard cut-outs of Miami's seafront hotels three miles to the south. Capone was wearing sunglasses and a pearl-grey fedora. A brown- and white-striped bathrobe was wrapped around his meaty body, and his pale legs and feet were bare.

'I got talkin' with the boss man, Lord Whoever, at one of them club luncheons,' he said. 'You know. An' it turns out that this is the very guy Faroli buys our plane from! What d'you think of that?'

Rio was wearing a purple, violet and mauve Hawaiian shirt over his yellow swim trunks. His arms and legs were tanned the colour of mahogany. 'You tell me,' he said. He reached across an ornate steel, copper and glass table on wheels, and splashed whiskey into a tumbler. He drank.

'Of course we gabbed about the ship some – and it seems this limey lordship let it go for ten grand.'

The bodyguard was watching two hummingbirds stitch the

heat haze around a patch of scarlet poinsettia. 'So?' he said indifferently.

'So Faroli invoiced me for thirteen and a half – with a receipt that musta been faked. And he didn't spend no three and a half grand having half a dozen baffles screwed into the tail of that ship.'

'I always said you couldn't trust the bastard,' Rio observed. He snatched a Webley automatic from the table, sighted it, and fired. The flat crack of the explosion was lost in the distant thunder of surf along the shore. One of the hummingbirds flew away. On the shaven grass at the edge of the flower bed, a tangle of blood and feathers palpitated. Rio grinned and laid the gun back on the table.

'If there's one thing that makes me mad, it's bein' crossed up on some two-bit – ' Capone broke off in mid-sentence. A bulky, hard faced man in a white alpaca jacket was walking across the sun-drenched lawn towards them. He was carrying a white telephone trailing a long lead back to the patio. 'Call for you, boss,' he said. 'From Chicago.'

Capone reached out for the instrument. He fished a crocodile cigar case from the pocket of his bathrobe as he listened. The heavy brows drew together in a scowl; the lower lip thrust out sullenly; behind the smoked lenses, the eyes grew mean. He manoeuvred a cigar from the case and clamped his teeth over it. Rio rose to his feet and approached with a gold cigar cutter. Capone waved it away and signalled him to listen, holding the receiver slightly away from his ear.

The bodyguard leaned his expressionless face towards his boss's angry features. He heard the high-pitched, excited voice in the earpiece:

' . . . bastard ditched me in a traffic jam on Michigan, but I figured he'd show at the broad's place sometime, so I parked the jalopy outside and waited. Around four, four thirty, the broad shows. She's in back of a sedan with McGrath.'

'McGrath!' Capone exploded. 'That mick sonofabitch! They musta come right on out after his torpedoes wrecked the Embassy. I'll get him for that, if it's the last thing I do. You figure she was in on the deal?'

'Search me, boss. All I know is, they waited outside until Faroli showed, some time between five and six. He got in the heap and they drove out to McGrath's place in Des Plaines. I moseyed around and finally I got in through a skylight in the roof. I overheard McGrath make Faroli a proposition: an extra five Cs a week if he'd switch sides and deliver tonight's consignment at the racetrack instead of Westwood.'

'The lousy bastard!' Capone said through set teeth. 'What did Faroli say?'

'He said it was okay by him. He agreed.'

'Jesus!' Capone exchanged glances with Rio. 'Where's the two-timin' four-flusher now?'

'Shacked up with the broad at her place.'

'Okay, kid,' Capone said. 'You did a good job. Now here's what you do: you stick right with that bum and you call me every hour on the hour, right?'

'Yes, Mr Capone.'

'I'll have instructions for you later. Right now, I got certain arrangements to make.' He hooked the receiver back on its rest and turned a rock-hard face towards Rio. 'Well, howdya like that!' he said.

'I told you,' Rio said.

'Yeah. Well, here's what *you* do, Frank. Get on to Danny Stanton of the muscle department, and have him alert Dutch Carpenter, Gunner Padden, Ray Cassidy and Stubby McGovern. I'll have the kid set Faroli up.' He chewed ferociously on the cigar. 'No half-assed freeloader from the East is goin' to cross *me* up and get away with it. Mister Bruno Fuckin' Faroli is on the spot – as of now!'

The mangled cigar swung around to point at Rio. 'For Chrissake gimme a light, Frank,' Capone said. 'You think I pay you to loaf around in the goddamn sun all day?'

PART IV

Full of the gilt and the gut of the twenties, when myths like moths surrounded the flame of anyone whom the newpapers made out to be richer or more wicked than the rest.

ANDREW SINCLAIR

13 BRUNO FARRELL

They say Torrio and Capone were the first to organise crime on a business footing. For my money, that's a hell of a way to run a business – spending half your time carving up the opposition! They had it all laid on: sixty per cent of the city's cops on the payroll, judges in their pocket, and Feds hamstrung by the administration, one hell of a demand for the product. But they had to go and foul up the whole deal, horsing around yelling, 'Keep off! This is my piece!' I mean, there was plenty in there for everybody. And they could of expanded the business a lot more. But did they do that? Did they hell! They beat their brains out thinking up ways to cross their rivals, switch clients from Them to Us, settle private feuds, strongarm the competition. I guess maybe it was some crazy kind of pride . . . but those guys sure wasted plenty of time that way!

It was almost dusk when Bruno Farrell left Smokey at Westwood. The team were in on the fact that she'd be flying the Vickers that night: there was no alternative. If they opened their mouths afterwards, it couldn't be helped. The liquor would have arrived – and that was all that would matter to Capone. Farrell could find some excuse if it was asked for . . . after the event.

He gave no explanation. Benjamin Jowett's advice to young men on the way up – 'Never apologise; never explain' – was good enough for him. Boscoe and Slats Halperin made no comment. Questions in any case formed slowly in their minds. Danny d'Amato raised his eyebrows but said nothing: his job was to keep the ship in the air and to navigate, not to worry about who sat behind the controls. Mendoza came across with a sample of Mexican *machismo*. Leaning down from the pedestal of the almighty male, he clapped Smokey on the shoulder and said: 'Don't worry, kid. We'll keep the home flares burnin' – an' we'll be right there to bail you out if anythin' goes wrong.' Angelo Ralfini was nowhere to be seen.

'Where *is* the guy, anyway?' Farrell asked irritably. 'He's

supposed to be here, for Chrissake.'

Mendoza shrugged. 'Haven't seen him all day,' he said.

'Angelo? Took off last evenin' around seven,' Boscoe offered. 'Said he was drivin' into town.'

'Well, when he shows, tell him I don't pay him to hang around town,' Farrell said. 'Make sure he's on hand to help when that plane gets back.'

Ten minutes later he was driving north along the turnpike towards Hinsdale and Westchester. The city was a yellow haze reflected on a cloudbank away to his right. He had gone about seven miles when he heard the roar of aero engines above the steady drone of the Auburn's motor. Pulling into the side of the road, he saw the stabbing flames of the Vimy's exhausts against the dark sky as Smokey climbed eastward towards the lake. It was then that he realised there was a tail on him once more.

As soon as the plane had taken off, Mendoza extinguished the runway lights and went into the house. There was a pay phone in the poolroom where the other guys hung out, but he had discovered a disused estate office on the second floor where there was an instrument with an outside line. When he had checked that Maggie Renato was busy cooking in the kitchen, and the others were all occupied, he stole up there and asked for a city number.

'Lieutenant Mulligan?' he said softly when the connection was made. 'Mendoza. Listen, I'm takin' a chance callin' from the house, so it'll have to be quick . . . Yeah, I know, but I figured this *might* be urgent . . . There's a special run tonight. Brandy from Quebec. But the plane's being flown by the girl . . . Sure, that's what I said: the girl. Your man's taken off in a dark green Auburn convertible, heading north. I overheard him talkin' to the broad, and he said something about a visit to McGrath, if that means anythin' to you . . . It does? Okay, that's is then. McGrath . . . 'Kay. Be seein' ya.'

Carefully, he replaced the receiver and went back downstairs.

Farrell was interested in automobiles, especially imported sports cars and hot rods. He had noticed the Model A roadster, therefore, not because it was a particularly fine specimen – it was in fact in poor condition – but simply because it was fitted with non-standard headlamps and three of the whitewall tyres were a different make to the fourth. His mind had automatically

registered the image of the car tagged with those characteristics, and thought no more of it . . . until the image showed up too frequently to be just a coincidence.

It was when he was crossing a brightly lit intersection at Western Springs that he recognised the roadster in his driving mirror. His conscious mind merely recorded the fact that he had seen it somewhere before: it was a familiar sight. Where had he seen it? On the way out to Westwood that afternoon, wasn't it? . . . But wait a minute, wait a minute – there was someplace else. Hell, yes! A few days ago! Parked in Hanson Street at night when he left the precinct house after his verbal duel with Mulligan . . .

Once he was concentrating on it, the doors of memory opened one after another. Surely there was yet a fourth occasion? Wasn't it . . . ? By Christ, yes! He had passed that car, or one like it, exactly like it, in the street outside Smokey's apartment just before he was snatched by McGrath! *It was a sight that was getting too damned familiar.*

Even then he might not have been certain – if the roadster hadn't stopped a couple of hundred yards behind him when he pulled off the road to watch Smokey's plane pass over. That wasn't too smart of the driver: for the second time, it was a dead give-away. He should have driven on past, and waited further along the turnpike for Farrell to overtake him again.

Was it the same tail he had lost on Michigan the night before? Could be. Farrell neither knew nor cared too much. All he knew was that it was equally important for him to shake the guy again. Only this time he was going to find out first who the bastard was . . . and who he was working for. He drove on until he saw a turnoff ahead, a dirt road winding away through trees. In the light of his headlamps he saw a fingerpost: *Girton's Farm – 2 miles.* He swung right and took the track.

The Auburn bumped through the wood, lurching on the twisting, rutted surface. A quarter of a mile from the turnpike, the trees grew more densely, the track made a sudden right-angle turn. Farrell gunned the motor, trod on the brakes, and spun the wheel. The car broadsided across the track and stalled. He cut the lights and got out.

Seconds later he heard the whine of gears and saw the glimmer of parking lights through the trees. The roadster crawled around the bend and stopped dead with a faint squeal of brakes as the dim radiance illuminated the Auburn blocking the track. Farrell was beside the lowered driving window with a gun in his hand. 'All right,' he rasped, 'outa that seat with the hands high, or I'll blow the top of your head off!'

There was a muffled exclamation from behind the wheel.

Farrell stood back while the door swung open and a spare figure wearing a long topcoat and a fedora clambered out with raised hands. No two ways about it: this was the same guy who'd been tailing him before. He switched on a pocket flashlight and directed the beam at the man's face.

Then it was Farrell's turn to gasp. He was staring at the squinting, hostile features of Angelo Ralfini.

'Why, you dirty little rat!' Farrell exclaimed. 'What the hell's the idea of followin' me?'

'Find out,' the boy said sullenly.

'Don't think I won't,' said Farrell. 'Unfasten the coat and jacket if you wanna stay in one piece.'

Angelo hesitated. 'I ain't even gonna count,' Farrell said. He clicked back the hammer of the Police Special. Scowling, the young hood did as he was told. Farrell tucked the flashlight under his arm, stepped swiftly forward, and plucked the gun from his prisoner's shoulder holster. With a backswing of his arm, he tossed it behind him into the trees. 'Now the knife,' he ordered. Angelo spat on the ground at Farrell's feet. Gingerly, he drew the blade from the sheath at his waist and dropped it. Farrell kicked the weapon under the roadster and backed off. The boy was as treacherous as a rattlesnake, and he was taking no chances. Once, during the jail break, he had seen him cut off a warden's hand rather than waste time picking the lock of a steel bracelet securing keys around the man's wrist. That kind of ruthlessness, allied to a rat-like cunning, could be more dangerous than a car full of torpedoes with Thompsons.

'All right,' Farrell said grimly. 'You been tailin' me two, three days. Who do you check back with? Who sicked you on to me?'

'Go fuck yourself,' the boy said. 'Big shot.'

Farrell thought quickly. A question and answer routine would lead nowhere. With this kind of punk, he had to show who was the boss from the start. Angelo's gutter-bred toughness would bow only to something tougher still – and that called for action. Fast. He remembered the words of George Stevens the first time they met. *The law is greater than the individual . . . do whatever is necessary to avoid your cover being blown . . . suppress your conscience for the greater good.* If he didn't get back that roll of film and fix the mess he was in, his cover *would* be blown. But good. And as long as he remained in ignorance of Angelo's motives, and who he was working for, there was a risk that he might still louse up the deal. Angelo was standing in his way: if he didn't come up clean, Farrell could blow the assignment as well as his cover. So it had to be the big stick. 'You heard what I said,' he snapped. 'I want an answer.'

'And you heard what *I* said. I don't aim to waste no breath repeatin' it.'

Farrell elevated the flashlight beam and shot the boy through the palm of his left hand.

The nickel-jacketed .38 calibre slug smashed its way through flesh and bone and cartilage, slamming Angelo's arm back against the soft top of the roadster. Blood spurted from the hole and flowed down his wrist. His cry of pain and outrage was lost in the ringing echoes of the explosion. 'Answer me, you double-crossin' little creep!' Farrell shouted.

Angelo was doubled up with his knees pressed together, nursing his shattered left hand with his right in the shelter of his crotch. 'Who's . . . talkin'?' he panted. 'Callin' me . . . names . . . when you're crossin' up your own boss . . . to . . . work for McGrath!'

Farrell froze. In the silence, wind rattled the leafless branches of a tree overhead. Farther away, traffic roared along the turnpike. 'You know that?' he said softly. 'You tailed me that far? Right into McGrath's place? You overheard?'

'Yes,' the boy groaned. 'Yes, you callous bastard. Yes!'

'How the hell did you get in there?'

Angelo told him. 'All right,' Farrell said. 'For the last time – who sent you?'

The young hood straightened up. Farrell had known about the knife he carried in his waistband. He hadn't known about the other, strapped to the gory left forearm beneath the sleeve. Angelo had secretly been working it loose as he talked. Now he flicked the murderous throwing knife straight at the undercover man's chest. Caught off balance and taken by surprise, Farrell barely had time to lurch sideways as he saw the blood-stained blade glint in the torchlight. The knife sliced through the shoulder of his coat and jacket, searing the base of his neck as it passed. At the same time, Angelo leaped forward and knocked the gun from his hand. The flashlight spun away to drop on the leafy floor.

Farrell lost his temper. The boy was diving for the Police Special. He crashed to the ground with a cry of pain as the undercover man landed on his back. Farrell hauled him up by the lapels and crashed a hard fist into his face again and again. 'You stinkin' . . . little rat,' he panted between blows. 'Tell me . . . who set you . . . spyin' . . . on me . . . before I beat the shit . . . outa you . . . '

Angelo went limp in his grasp. Farrell let him drop and kicked him on the jaw. 'Who was it?' he snarled. 'Tell me, or I'll . . . '

'All right, all right,' the boy yelled, seeing the foot raised

again. 'It was the Big Guy. It was Capone. He offered me five Cs a week to keep an eye on you. An' he was right, wasn't he, you tricky sonofabitch?'

'The bastard,' Farrell said. 'And you told him . . . what you overheard at McGrath's place?'

'Sure I did.' Angelo's eyes glittered malevolently in the dim light from the roadster's parking lamps. 'And he was plenty mad. You're gonna get yours, Faroli, an' that's for sure. You won't last an hour with them babies gunnin' for you!'

'Maybe,' Farrell said. 'Who knows? Right now I'm gonna see to it that at least I don't have *you* after me any more . . . '

He retrieved the gun, fired three shots into the Auburn's bolster gas tank, and then, as the inflammable spirit splashed to the ground, struck a match and tossed it towards the car. The gasoline ignited with a *whoomp*! that nearly blew him off his feet. A moment later the rear of the Auburn was enveloped in a sheet of white-hot flames.

The column of fire spiralled up among the trees, teased out between the branches by the wind. If the woods caught alight, Angelo could explain to the law how come he was there with a bullet-riddled auto and a hole in his hand. It should keep him busy enough to stall any attempt to tip off Capone or mess with Smokey's return to Westwood.

Farrell got into the roadster and turned it in the pulsating light of the flames. As he drove back to the turnpike, the boy was crawling, cursing, away from the holocaust.

It was eighteen miles from the forest track to Des Plaines. Farrell made it in twenty-seven minutes. On the way he passed fire department tenders from Westchester and Broadview roaring south towards Western Springs with lights blazing and bells clanging. Evidently the inhabitants of Girton's Farm had given the alert.

He found it surprisingly easy to break into McGrath's house the way Angelo had: there was an overhanging tree, a stack-pipe, an unsecured skylight in the conical turret roof. Luckily this was the Irish gang boss's residence; it was far less heavily guarded than his headquarters downtown. Farrell stole down a winding staircase and found himself in a long hallway outside the room where he had been taken with Smokey. There was no light showing under the door. He listened. A rumble of voices from the floor below; a hint of ragtime from a distant radio or phonograph. Gently, he turned the door handle and stepped into the room.

He unclipped the pencil flash from his inside pocket and pressed the switch. The thin beam of light showed the room as he remembered it. Was the vital roll of film still in the top

drawer of the walnut bureau? Closing the door, he tiptoed across to find out. The drawer slid open without a sound.

Farrell directed the flashlight beam inside. The spool – a slim orange-red cylinder between two black discs – was lying on top of a sheaf of cancelled cheques in one corner.

The undercover man heaved a sigh of profound relief. He dropped the spool in his pocket and closed the drawer. When he was a yard away from the door, he heard voices and footsteps in the hallway outside.

For the second time that evening, Farrell froze. The flashlight beam swept urgently around the overfurnished room. There were two deep window bays masked by heavy drapes. It was his only hope if they were heading his way. He darted across and slipped behind the folds of velour. A moment later the door opened and light dissolved the darkness from the far side of the thick material. Farrell checked that the toecaps of his shoes were not showing beneath the drapes and held his breath.

'. . . don't see how the hell he could land at Altaville with all them other ships around,' a deep voice was saying. 'You ain't made no arrangements for that?'

'Nah,' McGrath's voice answered. 'He won't even try. Them wops are all alike. Sure you cannot trust them one inch. Not an inch, I'm tellin' you. He never intended to work for me. I didn't expect him to. He was pretendin' to fall in with me ideas because it was the easiest way outa here.'

'Then why did you let him get away with it, boss?' This was Red Radzhinski's voice, truculent and tough.

'I wanted him to get away with it,' McGrath said smugly. 'I was relyin' on it . . . relyin' on him crossin' me like he said he'd cross Capone.'

'Shit, Teddy, I don't quite figure . . . ?' the man with the deep voice began.

'I was playin' it smart, see?' the Irishman cut in. 'I'd gotten the information I wanted: who he was flyin' for an' how the scheme worked an' all. It's a smart idea too. I figured I could avail meself of the opportunity Faroli was creatin' – and give that fuckin' Neapolitan a bloody nose at the same time. I owe him something for fouling up our deal with the horses last week.'

'Yeah, but . . . '

'Did you ever hear tell of the Trojan Horse?' McGrath demanded. 'Likely not. Well, I'm takin' a leaf outa the classics here, Jerry. We're gonna hit Capone from the inside this time. I have friends in Canada who've pinpointed the field near Quebec that Faroli's usin'. Other friends of mine will be there

before he lands tonight. They'll take care of Capone's delivery men, and as soon as the plane arrives, Mister Faroli's gonna receive an urgent message to call Capone in Florida. He won't get through. But while he's away my friends will rub out his mechanic. Faroli'll come back to find the plane loaded and ready to go . . . but no mechanic. He'll wait around awhile. They'll feed him some story about how the guy took a powder. Maybe to see some dame. I don't know. Anyway, Faroli will have to take off on his jack because the consignment's important and it's expected back here.' McGrath paused and then said impressively: 'Only he won't be flyin' back a cargo of brandy like he thinks: that freight compartment's gonna be loaded with Homer and five of my boys carryin' typewriters! It was Homer's monniker give me the idea.'

'Hey, boss,' Radzhinski said admiringly, 'that's some smart pitch you figured there!'

'Don't you think? As soon as that ship stops rollin' at Capone's field out in the Argonne, Faroli's gonna get his in the back – an' then the boys'll come out with gats blazin' and wipe out Capone's team. When it's all over, me, I'll go on out and ferry the plane back to Altaville, an' we'll continue the service from there – but on the north side of the river this time.'

'And the brandy?' the man called Jerry asked.

'You'll get your delivery like I promised. We'll run her in by launch tomorrow night,' McGrath said.

Behind the curtain, Farrell was aghast at the implications of what he'd heard. He'd been beaten at his own game in the web of deceit and intrigue he'd spun! Fearless Farrell, the smart-aleck G-man, had done it again! He had taken the photos he needed, and recovered the film. But look at the hole he had landed himself in at the same time! After Angelo's report, he'd be on the spot with Capone for sure. He'd figured himself for smart, putting one over on McGrath – when all the time the Irishman had been double-crossing *him*! Now he was blocked at McGrath's place, unable to use the information he'd learned, while Smokey . . .

Smokey would be piloting a cargo of death back from Canada.

It would be her slender back, not Farrell's, that would receive the hail of Thompson slugs originally intended for him when the plane landed at Westwood. Because he had goofed, walking into McGrath's hands and allowing the film to be taken off him, he had sent the girl to certain death.

Farrell ground his teeth in self-disgust. It was all his fault. He was sacrificing Smokey to retrieve his own blunder. Worse still, he should have been able to foresee it: he'd even had a clue. Or if not a clue, a hint. He remembered the advertising

hoarding they'd passed on the way to Smokey's apartment. She'd drawn his attention to the bill announcing that Duffield's air circus was performing at Altaville. And he hadn't made the connection. He should have realised that Altaville must be the track where he'd made the forced-landing before, realised therefore that he couldn't land the Vickers there when the place'd be littered with Duffield's ships and gear, known that McGrath wouldn't – couldn't – expect him to go through with the deal. He should have been wise to the fact that the whole thing smelled. What price Beat-'em-all Bruno now?

The hell with recriminations and regrets, he told himself fiercely. What was he going to *do*? He could take the easy way out. After all, he had completed the assignment: he had the evidence Stevens wanted. He could shrug off Smokey's fate as an unfortunate accident, wait out McGrath's meeting, and quietly fade to Washington with the spool of film. *The law is greater than the individual* . . . No! Fuck Stevens and his goddamn platitudes for once! He had already killed the guard at Guzik's offices and maimed Angelo. He would be responsible for Danny d'Amato's murder in Quebec. If he chickened out now, there would be Mendoza and the others. And Smokey.

Whatever happened, he had to save that girl.

How could he do it? There was only one possible way, and that wasn't certain. Somehow or other he must head her off; if she landed any other place than Westwood, the deal would go cold on the hoods and maybe they'd hold their fire. But how in Christ's name? He stole a glance at his watch. She wouldn't even be half-way there yet. D'Amato would still be alive. An idea flashed suddenly across his mind. Of course! Duffield! The air circus had gotten him into this mess – even if it was indirectly. Well, now they could help him out. They had pursuit planes there . . . interceptors. If he could somehow latch on to one of those. But first he had to get out of here. In one piece.

Cautiously, he turned around. Through the windows, he could see trees in front of the house silhouetted against the street lighting. Immediately below the bay was the shallow, slanting roof of the porch. He would make a run for it right now, he decided. In the room, they were discussing the intricacies of some booze deal, and he was able to place the owner of the third voice: Jerry Slater, bigtime boss of the North Side speakeasy chain. Well, he couldn't wait for them to finish their goddamn conference – it might go on for hours. He put up a hand and tested the window latch. It was too stiff to move. Farrell sighed. It would have to be the rough stuff again.

The lower panes of the tall casements were about five feet

high and two feet wide. Warily, he stepped up on to the window seat and leaned his shoulder against one experimentally. When he heard the glass creak, he turned and placed the palms of both hands against the pane. Then, abruptly he thrust outwards with all his strength.

The window exploded from the frame with an appalling clatter. Farrell kicked out a wicked triangle of glass that was spearing up from the woodwork and leaped through on to the roof.

He heard a confused outcry behind him . . . and then he was pitching forward (the roof was steeper than he had thought), overbalancing, falling . . .

The drop to the gravelled drive-in was about fifteen feet. He landed with a jolt that jarred every bone in his body, sprawled on his face, scrambled up, and began to run. There was a vivid flash, followed by another, as two shots cracked out from the shattered window. Slugs scuffed up the gravel by his feet. Voices shouted. Footsteps pounded somewhere in the house.

Weaving from side to side, Farrell sprinted for the gates. The roadster was parked half a block away. If he could only make the street . . .

He couldn't. There was a big sedan just inside the gates. As shots rang out again above the porch, three men jumped from the car and ran toward him. Farrell dodged around the corner of the house and made for the wall at the back of the property. He burst through a shrubbery, pelted across a paved yard, passed two more autos, a group of outbuildings. More shots – a whole fusillade this time. Bullets splatted through the leaves behind him, chipping the brickwork by his shoulder. A ricochet screamed off into the night; glass tinkled from a headlamp on one of the cars. Then he was at the wall, jumping for the coping, hauling himself up and over. He dropped on the far side.

He was in a vacant lot strewn with rubble. Panting, he staggered over the rough ground, tripping on stones and baulks of wood in the dark. Before he made the farther side, the hoods were swarming over the wall from McGrath's grounds, firing as they came.

Farrell flung himself down behind a pile of bricks in the angle between a ten-foot stake fence and the boundary wall of the next property. He was cornered. If he tried to climb the fence or the wall, he would be a sitting duck for McGrath's marksmen; if he stayed where he was, he might be able to hold them off for a while, but ultimately they would creep near enough to get him. It was just a question of time.

He peered over the top of the brick-pile, straining his eyes through the blackness. There seemed to be seven or eight of

them – denser blurs in the dark, fanned out across the lot, moving inexorably closer. He drew the Police Special and loosed off two rounds. The blurs flattened to the ground. Then he heard McGrath's voice shouting orders, Radzhinski replying. There was a crackle of answering fire. Bullets thwacked into the bricks and whined over his head. When he looked again, the blurs were nearer.

Farrell fired again and reloaded. He took the miniature spool of film from his pocket and jammed it up into the lining at the narow end of his necktie, closing the gap with a pin from his lapel. There were voices all around now, as neighbours wakened by the racket threw up their windows and demanded what the hell was going on. Dogs barked. In the distance a train whistle wailed beneath the cold stars.

The routine continued – gunmen advancing, Farrell firing, the hoods dropping and then shooting back to make him duck while they advanced again. And then suddenly, astonishingly, guns blazed all along the wall behind the undercover man, pumping lead in the direction of McGrath's soldiers. More shouts . . . a few scattered shots stabbing the night with flame from the centre of the lot . . . and an abrupt withdrawal of the attacking troops. 'All right, Faroli,' Lieutenant Mulligan's voice said from over the wall, 'you better come with us.'

Jason Mettner was sitting in the squad car scribbling in a notebook by the light of the dashboard instruments. 'Don't you ever stop?' Mulligan growled as they brought Farrell up to the door of the black flivver.

The newspaperman yawned. 'That's the way it seems,' he admitted. 'Jesus, I can't remember when I had a night's sleep. Even on the night-club beat I got to bed *sometimes*!' He fished a cigarette from a crumpled pack in his breast pocket and put it in the corner of his mouth. 'What the hell – this is gonna be a swell story. Mob shooting always makes the front pages, and when it's mixed in with beautiful girl aviators rum-running by air . . . well, I figured I might as well start working on the intro while I waited.'

'How the hell did you know that?' Farrell demanded.

Mulligan shifted a wad of gum from one side of his mouth to the other and laughed. 'Capone ain't the only one to plant a stoolie in your team, Mac,' he said.

Farrell stared at the dim outline of the policeman's face in the gloom. 'For Chrissake!' he exclaimed. 'Even the hoods cross you up in this town!' It wasn't surprising that Angelo's passion to get in with the Mafia should have led him to betrayal: he would have been a natural for Capone to subvert. But it was

a shock for the undercover man to find that he'd unsuspectingly employed someone playing a rôle parallel to his own – a cop infiltrating a mob! 'Who was it?' he demanded.

'I don't even mind tellin' you – seein' you ain't gonna be goin' back there,' the lieutenant replied. 'A Mex does some work for me sometimes!'

'Mendoza! The one guy I really trust – and he turns out to be a cop!' Farrell said disgustedly. 'There's fuckin' irony for you!' The irony in fact was much sharper than Mulligan or Mettner realised.

For the second time, Mulligan chuckled. He seemed to be pleased with himself. 'Bein' as how I got the dope on you both ways,' he said genially, 'how's about using your loaf for once, Faroli, and comin' clean?'

'Clean?' Farrell echoed. 'After what you just told me, that's a swell word comin' from a cop! It just goes to prove what I always said: never trust a flatfoot.' It wasn't too hot, but it was the best he could manage. He was tired. In any case, Mulligan didn't rise. He went on as though Farrell hadn't spoken: 'Why not be sensible and come on down the station house and sing?'

Farrell said: 'Is that an invitation?'

'It's an order. You're under arrest, Faroli.'

Farrell thought quickly. Such plans as he had for rescuing Smokey were unformulated, but clearly there wasn't a hope in hell of reaching her before she took off, minus d'Amato, on the return journey. The alternative was a crazy idea, a million to one chance, but there was that one faint hope that he could pull it off. If he could contrive to stay alive until dawn. For this deal would only work in daylight.

But if he was going to try – and he would have to try – he must stay alive right here in this area. With Capone and McGrath both gunning for him, the odds on that didn't seem too healthy. On the other hand, what safer place could he find than the inside of a precinct house? He'd have to make his way back to Des Plaines later, but he'd handle that one when it came up. In the meantime, if he could keep Mulligan talking in his office . . . if he could stall to avoid being locked in the cooler . . . Aloud, he said sneeringly: 'Oh, yeah? Under arrest? On what charge?'

'Felonious entry,' Mulligan said calmly. 'Burglary. Causin' a public affray. Violation of the 18th Amendment. Flyin' a plane without a proper Illinois certificate. Violation of the aviation regulations. You name it.'

'You couldn't make them stick.'

'Try me.' Mulligan said. 'You figure you still got cover?'

Farrell turned to Mettner. 'That story you're writin',' he

said; 'could you use a first-person interview? The lowdown on the aerial booze run? Inside stuff on these last two shoot-ups?'

'Could I!' Mettner's unlit cigarette bobbed excitedly between his lips. 'You just start talking, baby, and I can promise you bold-face type on the front page for everything you say!'

Farrell had opened his jacket and held up his tie as though he was afraid of getting it soiled when the uniformed cops surrounding them had frisked him and taken his gun. They hadn't tumbled the spool concealed in the lining. Now he tucked the tie in between two buttons of his shirt and refastened his jacket. He got into the back of the tourer. 'Okay, let's go, captain,' he said to Mulligan.

The lieutenant waved the cops back to the three squad cars lined up behind them. He got in beside Farrell and drew his gun. The driver started the motor. 'Don't get any fancy ideas, Faroli,' Mulligan said as they pulled away from the kerb. 'You may think it smart to use my office for a press conference, but I warn you, anything you say – '

'Sure, sure. I know,' Farrell interrupted. 'But don't *you* get any ideas, buster. I owe Mettner here a favour. I'm willing, this time, to spill what I know for him. You can listen and take it all down . . . but don't think it's gonna get you any place sendin' *me* up. My protection still holds, I'm tellin' you.'

Mulligan shifted the gum again from one cheek to the other. It was a long voyage. 'We'll see, but,' he said grimly.

In the stuffy, spearmint- and smoke-laden atmosphere of the policeman's Hanson Street office, Farrell started talking. He gave them all the details of the sky booze run, from the Canadian as well as the Chicago end; he came across with the organisation of his team; he described McGrath's attack on Westwood and the offer the Irishman had made him. He explained how Angelo had overheard the conversation and put him on the spot with Capone, not knowing that Farrell intended to wise the Big Guy up. He told them how he'd found out McGrath was going to double-cross *him*, and he even filled them in on some of the operations carried on in Guzik's office – though he said nothing of the photos he had taken or the guard he had killed. What the hell, he had nothing to lose! He was getting out with the merchandise Stevens wanted and anyway, with both the North-Siders and the Syndicate after his blood, Bruno Faroli was washed up as an inside man for the moment. Maybe he'd come back later. But at least his cover wasn't blown: so far as the Windy City was concerned, he'd simply be tagged as another squealer from the East. In the meantime, without revealing his own secret, he might as well give the only honest cop in town the benefit of what he knew.

Mulligan was jubilant, making late-night deliveries of gum every few minutes. 'I always knew you'd see sense one day,' he said thickly. 'You're too smart for this game anyway, boy. You sign this testimony and cop a plea, and I'll see you get a light stretch. Maybe even parole, if we draw a lenient judge.'

'Don't kid yourself,' Farrell said. 'This'll make a scoop for Mettner, but the rest of it – especially the stuff about Capone – ain't gonna get no farther than the spike on O'Mara's desk. You know that as well as I do.'

Mulligan's chewing-rate accelerated. 'Just wait an' see,' he said.

Mettner yawned loudly, closed his notebook, and got to his feet. 'I don't know about you guys,' he said wearily, 'but I'm beat to the wide. Howie – I'm going to hold my face under the cold faucet, see if I can wake me up some.'

'You do that,' the lieutenant said. 'Faroli, there's two things I want to ask you. One, just why did you let that girl fly your plane tonight and break into McGrath's place? Two, how the hell can you sit there gabbing away when she's like to be knocked off by McGrath's hoods any moment? I'll send a squad out to Westwood, but – '

'One,' Farrell cut in brusquely, 'I had personal business to attend to. Him and me had an old score to settle. As for the girl . . . ' He broke off and slumped suddenly against the back of the chair. His face had gone pale. His left hand slid up under the collar of his jacket. The fingers came away glistening red. 'Some little rat nicked me with a throwing knife,' he said uncertainly. 'It was only a scratch but it bled some. I . . . I guess I must have opened her up making it across that vacant lot. Could you . . . ?'

Mulligan rose hastily to his feet. 'Hang in there, son,' he said. 'I'll go get you a wet towel from the washroom.' Chewing ferociously, he strode out.

14 JASON METTNER

The coffin crashed heavily to the floor, coming open. The corpse tumbled slowly and sedately out and came to rest with its face in the centre of a wreath . . . When they raised the corpse the wreath came too, attached to him by a hidden end of a wire driven into his cheek. He had worn a cap which, tumbling off, exposed a small blue hole in the centre of his forehead. It had been neatly plugged with wax and was painted, but the wax had been jarred out and lost. They couldn't find it, but by unfastening the snap in the peak, they could draw the cap down to his eyes.

WILLIAM FAULKNER, *Sanctuary*

The eyes of the man in the washroom looked as though they hadn't closed on a night's sleep since the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson. One of them was screwed up against the smoke drifting from a cigarette slanting from the corner of his mouth; the other stared accusingly out of the mirror at me. Neither convinced me that it was really my property. I was wishing neither of them was when Mulligan came into the room and splashed cold water on his face. It didn't make too much difference.

'What the hell are you doin' – moochin' around in here?' he spluttered through a hand towel. 'This bird Faroli's begun to sing. Okay – but there's still a lotta questions I wanna ask, an' I need your help in there. Jesus, Jay, you gotta earn that scoop, for Chrissake!'

I waved at the reflection in the glass. It waved back at me mockingly. A wise guy. 'I was hoping I could make him go away first,' I said. 'The bastard's been tailing me too damned long.'

'Ah, c'mon, you! What's eatin' you? Sure, you look great. A hell of a sight better than you did pushin' that night-club beat. You even put on a coupla pounds weight, but.'

'Sure,' I said. 'A pound under each eye.'

He threw the towel into a waste bin, plucked another from

the rack, and soaked it under the faucet. 'The guy's been creased with a chiv. He's sick,' he said. 'Get goin' before he changes his mind or passes out.' He led the way back to his office.

'Shit!' said Howard Mulligan, alumnus of the Austin High School on Central and Washington Boulevard, presently Lieutenant of Police in the Hanson Street precinct. The room was empty. And, like the man said in the kid's story book, the more we looked inside, the more Faroli wasn't there.

'But I *told* them bums in the bull pen not to let anyone – ' He dammed his jewelled Hibernian rhetoric in mid-flow and stared at his desk. A stack of papers from his in-tray had filed themselves on the floor. Beyond the desk, the window was open. He leaped across and looked out. A police flivver in the courtyard below suddenly burst into song and took off through the archway leading into Hanson Street. There was a stackpipe a couple of feet wide of the window. 'The double-crossing bastard!' Mulligan yelled. 'Come on – after him!'

In his graduate year at Austin, Howie made the hundred yard dash in ten decimal three seconds. That night he clipped a clear three-tenths from his time. He was out of that office, through the bull pen and down the stairs before the flivver had shifted to third. There was a patrol waiting at the kerb outside the entrance doors. 'Follow that squad car!' Howie screams, pointing at the red tail light dwindling down the street.

Five gets you ten Mack Sennett would have paid for the scenario of what followed. Mulligan and me piled into the back seat of the police tourer, and the driver shot off in pursuit. At the same time a Hupmobile sedan a ways up the street pulled out of a space in front of a fire plug and fell in behind us. The cop sitting with our driver was a beefy guy with a face like a St Bernard dog that lost his brandy cask. As we passed the Hupmobile, he slewed sideways in his seat and shouted: 'Hoods, Lieutenant! That was McGrath and Radzhinski in back of that buggy!'

Mulligan swung around and gazed out the back window. 'Followin' us,' he said. 'Or followin' Faroli. Likely they'll have tailed us in from Des Plaines and waited outside the precinct house for 'til we let him go. They musta noticed,' he added bitterly, 'we never get to hold that bastard!'

I said: 'Yeah. Looks like they want him as much as you. How come? What would be important enough to make McGrath risk coming all the way in here to start another round?'

'You tell me,' Mulligan said. 'Somethin' to do with that plane, if you was right and it *was* him who tipped you off.' He unholstered his gun and glanced out the rear window again. St

Bernard already had a Police Special in his Alp-sized fist.

The squad car Faroli was driving turned right into Halsted Street, heading north. As we skittered around the corner a couple of hundred yards behind him, a Duesenburg limousine nosed out of an alley and turned in the same direction. I had a flash vision of big men holding guns – then our driver was cursing, wrestling with the wheel, and the flivver was rocketing to the far side of the roadway as he swerved too abruptly to avoid the big auto.

'Oh, no!' Mulligan exclaimed. 'Did you see that!'

We clipped the offside kerb, bounced back towards the centre of the street, straightened up, and sped after Faroli. 'Bad drivers,' I sympathised. 'You get 'em everywhere.'

'The hell with that; I mean the guys inside,' Mulligan snarled. 'More hoods! Capone's mob this time. I saw Dutch Carpenter, Stubby McGovern and coupla other triggermen in there. This I could do without!'

Jesus, I thought. A Duesenburg yet! How come the baddies always get to have the good cars? I looked out the rear window. The Hupmobile was a hundred yards behind us; the limousine catching up on him fast. 'That Faroli,' I said. 'Seems like he's a popular guy.'

Mulligan muttered something about Faroli's maternal relationship that was probably untrue. The convoy roared northwards through the empty city. It was cold and still dark, though the clouds seemed to have blown away and there was a sliver of moon balanced over the lake. The streets wore that honed, glassy look that streets have when you should have been in bed hours ago and you're wearing a glassy look yourself – the lights reflected on dry, shiny asphalt, the sidewalks swept clear of people by the wind, the deserted roadway leading to the end of the world. 'Lieutenant,' the driver said, 'you want I should sound the gong?'

'Sure,' Mulligan said. 'Make with the fuckin' gong. Why the hell should all those sons-of-bitches be sleeping anyway?'

Faroli was hitting eighty when he made the intersection where Halsted runs into North Clark as it ducks to avoid Sheridan Park. His gong was clanging too. And – wouldn't you know? – a prowl car half a mile up the road hears him coming, screams off in the same direction *ahead* of Faroli, and operates a third gong! I guess he figured he was clearing the way for the mayor or something. So there we were, three police flivvers, a Hupmobile and a goddamn Duesenburg, all breaking the law in a northwesterly direction towards Harwood Heights and Park Ridge . . . with the lad everyone was after only making second place in the event! All we needed was a little guy with a tooth-

brush moustache and a derby, hanging on to the last car by the crook of his umbrella. But around there the film editor cut in a couple of hundred feet of drama.

There was a refuge centred in the Y of the intersection. Right? Okay, there's a garbage man – or he may have been a junk dealer or a dog catcher, for all I know – pulling his truck away from the bins on the refuge. He hears our cavalcade thundering up toward him. And instead of pulling his horses back and staying where he is, the creep whips them up and tries to make the opposite sidewalk . . .

The prowl car and Faroli had plenty of time to react. They swerved across to the left side of the street while the cart was still half-way across the roadway, and whipped past the refuge on the wrong side without slackening speed. Our guy followed on the same rails. But McGrath's man, either because our flivver blocked his view or because he didn't give a damn, carried on until the last moment – and then trod on the brakes when he saw he couldn't make it. The Hupmobile shuddered, shook its ass like a dog coming out of water, and then, as a rear wheel caught in the street-car track, spun around a couple of times and rubbed noses with a cast-iron hitching post at the edge of the sidewalk.

Guns blazed from both autos as Capone's driver twitched the limousine past, but McGrath's car managed to start again and limped along in last place, leaving one fender like a black steel question-mark in the road.

The question that was interesting me was whether those Syndicate Thompsons were going to blast through the back of the flivver into my spine. I turned around to check. He was gaining fast, but there were no muzzles poking out the windows . . . yet.

Faroli hauled ahead of the other police tourer. The houses and stores and apartment blocks whipping past on either side grew smaller and shabbier. We passed gas stations and shanty-towns and hamburger stands on vacant lots as the sky paled over the railroad yards by the factories of Niles and Morton Grove. Faroli was three hundred yards ahead, with the un-invited squad car in between; the Duesenburg was three yards behind, pulling out to overtake. 'Can't you for Chrissake make this heap go faster?' Mulligan growled.

'My foot's so far through the floorboards I got blisters from the heat of the motor already,' the driver said. 'Sir.'

The Duesenburg hissed past and overtook the other squad car. No guns. But he was passing on a rise in the long, straight road. He was still in the centre of the street when he made the crest and found himself face to face with an early street-car

bucking up the other side of the hill into town.

I'll say that boy knew how to drive! The two police cars were too close for him to pull over to the right. The street-car was dead ahead. And in the dawn light I could see that the left-hand lane was blocked by a line of street traders setting up market stalls by the kerb all the way down the grade. He stood on everything and spun the wheel to make the big auto break away. It turned around three times as the street-car rocketted past and the rest of us got clear, then he let go and allowed it to shoot backwards to the opposite kerb, bounce to the centre of the road, and finally take up the chase again in the right direction.

In the meantime, Faroli had cut across and taken a side street between the barrows on the left. The other squad car couldn't make it and ran out of road. Our driver braked down to about fifty and took it on two wheels as the first man screamed around in a U-turn. Too bad we cut it a shade too fine and the offside fender caught the shafts of a vegetable barrow. The dawn turned blood red as the windshield was plastered with flying tomatoes. The cop at the wheel cursed; the flivver ran up on the sidewalk and stalled.

While St Bernard and the driver cleaned off the screen and the owner of the barrow screeched behind us, the Hupmobile, the Duesenburg, and the other squad car steamed past after Faroli. Eventually we followed on a poor fifth.

We were plunging through a maze of back streets on the outskirts of Des Plaines. 'Jesus,' I said suddenly. 'You know what? The sonofabitch is heading for Altaville racetrack! That limey air circus is based there: he's aiming to hijack one of their planes!'

Mulligan turned and looked at me. His jaws were moving. 'So you finally figured it out,' he said. How was I to take that? Had he really guessed it before – or had he picked it up off me and said that to make me *think* he had? I stared back, searching for a clue, but his features showed about as much expression as the north face of the Woolworth building. On the whole, I guess it was his point. I waited until we hit a straight-away that was more than forty yards long, and set fire to a cigarette.

Inside the open gate of the racecourse it was fiesta night at the old corral. Arc lights were blazing all around the track and across the arena. There were planes and trucks everywhere and guys running around between them. At first, looking at the empty stands, I figured I was back in Joinville Falls watching a performance. Then I caught on: it was dawn of a Monday morning; they'd been playing a week at Des Plaines, now they

were moving on to the next whistle-stop. The flivver skidded to a halt and we piled out.

Faroli's car was behind the timekeeper's box, but he wasn't in it. The Hupmobile and the Duesenburg were parked on either side of the home straight, their occupants crouched down behind the hoods with the guns in their mitts. Four cops from the other police car came hurrying toward us, looking helpless. Mulligan, St Bernard and our driver went to meet them, the lieutenant waving his arms and shouting. But before he'd gotten more than half a dozen words out through the mailbox, there was a burst of gunfire.

The two sets of hoods weren't firing at Faroli: they were shooting at each other. Like it was some kind of competition to decide who gets the honour of knocking off the interloper.

As soon as the typewriters rattled, Duffield's men took it on the lam. They threw themselves on the ground or vanished behind packing cases and rolled-up marquees or legged it for the stands. It only lasted a minute but the noise sounded like it was Armageddon directed by de Mille. One of Capone's men flopped down on his back and Radzhinski collapsed on the Hupmobile's running board clawing his shoulder. Then Mulligan was yelling through a bullhorn he had borrowed from the local cops . . . and all of a sudden the hoods from both mobs were blazing away at the flatfeet as they dived for cover behind the squad car. It was at that moment that I saw Faroli.

He was sprinting across the arena toward a two-seater Bristol pursuit plane that the mechanics had left warming up away on the far side of the field. McGrath saw him too. He hared out from behind his auto and dodged between a stack of packing cases, following Faroli with a Thompson in his hands.

Faroli made the Bristol, ducked beneath the lower wing and whipped the chocks away from the wheels. As the ship began lumbering forward, he swung himself up, cocked a leg over the fuselage, and lowered himself into the pilot's seat. McGrath halted in the centre of the field, raised the Thompson, saw that the range was too great, and then began running toward the nearest plane. It was one of Duffield's racers – a nose-heavy aluminium monoplane, all engine and no body, with the stubby wings supported on struts slanting down parasol-wise from a mounting above the radial motor. There were a couple of guys face down on the grass by the ship, and the Irishman's Thompson persuaded them to swing the airscrew as he scrambled into the cockpit. Who said pigs couldn't fly?

Faroli had taxied to the far end of the field. He gunned the motor and started his take-off as the hoods decided to call it a day. They crowded back into their cars and careered off to-

ward the entrance gates, helped on their way by a final volley from the law. Radzhinski and the Capone man were left behind to make their excuses for the guests who left the party early.

That was when Sennett bowed out and Ben Lyon took the director's chair. The Bristol skimmed the white rails and rose into the yellow light staining the sky to the east. McGrath's racer snarled after it crosswind and floated up over the roofs beyond the racetrack. He banked and climbed after Faroli toward the lake.

Mulligan ran up with waving arms and a face like Priam's after the fall of Troy. 'That no-account bum,' he frothed, 'has gotten away with it just one time – '

He stopped – he even stopped chewing – and stared. Duffield was emerging from a ritzy trailer with silk curtains over the windows. He was wearing a leather coat over mauve and white striped pyjamas and flying boots. The unfastened helmet was still on his head. Perhaps it grew there instead of hair. 'I say, look here,' he said, 'I hired this bally field until noon. Dash it all, you can't barge in here and turn the place into a bloody shootin' gallery just because you – '

'Shuddup!' Mulligan snapped. 'Whaddya got here that'll take three people and outpace those two ships out there?' He pitched one in the general direction of Faroli and McGrath.

Beneath the moustache, his lordship's mouth fell open. He squeezed the sleep from his eyes with his knuckles. 'I . . . I dunno,' he stammered. 'The jolly old Tri-motor, I suppose. Yes, the Ford should do the job. Why?'

'Can you fly her yourself?'

'Fly her? I should darned well think so! Why, she was the first kite – '

'Get her into the air. I'm requisitioning the ship. Police. Come on, man – move!' Howie shouted. And we did. He could do that when he wanted. He should have been a top sergeant in the Marines. It seemed only seconds later that we were groaning up into the sky over the railroad yards around Skokie. McGrath's racer and the Bristol were two specks against the light as the Almighty hauled up the curtain on tomorrow.

Once behind the controls, Duffield too became the man of action. He pulled the ceiling down on that ship so fast that the altimeter needle got dizzy and refused to budge beyond 10,000 feet. The violet haze over the city's waterfront slid away behind the wings and we flew over the lake. The water was still the colour of hammered pewter, but up here we were already well into Monday, heading a few degrees left of a blazing sun that your man had hoisted over the horizon as we rose. There was cloud a couple of thousand feet below us to the north –

a snow carpet stretching away up to Canada and beyond – but Faroli and McGrath were scooting north-east into an empty sky that hadn't decided yet what colour it wanted to be.

'For Chrissake don't lose 'em,' Mulligan shouted over the roaring racket of the ship's three radial engines. 'If they shift course and head into that sun . . . '

Duffield turned and shook his head. His features were blurred by the vibration jarring every movable surface in the cramped cabin. 'Don't worry, cock,' he yelled. 'She's rising fast – and we're already above 'em and gaining like billy-o. If I knew what we were trying to do . . . ?'

'What?'

'I said, what's it all about?'

Mulligan left his bucket seat and crouched down behind the pilot's right shoulder. He stared out the windshield, past the spinning disc of the centre prop, at the distant specks which were becoming more recognisable as airplanes every second. 'There's an old limey bomber flying this way from Quebec,' he replied. 'There's a gang of torpedoes aboard – but the kid flyin' her don't know that. The guy in the first plane is hopin' to warn her off, wise her up someway. Don't ask me how. The second guy's gonna try and stop him.'

'What ho!' Duffield chortled. 'Torpedoes, eh? A load of the jolly old tinfish, by Jove! What'll these gangsters think of next! Who's going to be on the receiving end of those? Some happy boatman on the lake?'

Mulligan glanced at me and rolled his eyes. He started to put his lordship right and then decided to let that one float away with the current. It didn't make any difference anyway. 'What d'you want me to do?' Duffield asked.

'Keep above them and play it by ear. There's nothing we *can* do but watch. But I wanna see exactly what happens, just the same.'

The sun rose higher and left a blue stain in the sky behind it. McGrath's racer flashed silver in the bright light as it overhauled Faroli's green and brown camouflaged Bristol. Mulligan's jaws moved faster the nearer we got to the pair of them. We saw long shadows on the undulations of land as they crossed the far shore of the lake and winged toward Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. Farther off still, Huron and Erie streaked the horizon with gold.

When we were near enough to make out the struts and spars, and see the RFC roundels on Faroli's wings, McGrath climbed off to one side and then dived on the Bristol. We had a grandstand seat for what followed, though jolly old Duffield must

have felt frightfully cheesed off, dontcher know: it was a hell of a sight more spectacular than anything he ever put on.

Mulligan and me crowded to the side windows of the cabin to watch. It was like something straight out of *The Dawn Patrol* – only these particular angels were the bootleg variety and not those from Hell. Well, not quite. Faroli stood the Bristol on its port wingtips and hauled off in a vertical bank to let McGrath shoot past him. He must have seen the racer coming. McGrath pulled out of his dive, zoomed into a loop – and then, when he was upside down at the zenith, half-rolled on to an even keel to complete a perfect Immelmann turn. Now he was facing back the way he had come, five hundred feet above the Bristol and flying on a course at ninety degrees from Faroli. He banked steeply and dived again.

Faroli was ready for him and rolled away to the right. The racer flashed past . . . and this time the Irishman pulled her up beneath the Bristol and began to stalk Faroli from below. This was dangerous for our boy. The classic pursuit position for the kill – just above or below the quarry's tail – was useless to McGrath. The only armament he had was a hand-held Thompson, and if he fired straight ahead from that position, he would blast his own airscrew to hell. He had to manoeuvre his ship alongside and aim over the side of the cockpit while he held the stick ready with his knees. Or he could place himself immediately above or underneath the Bristol and rake the ship from there. But in each case he had to get within thirty or forty feet for the gun to be effective – and he hadn't too much ammunition to waste. There was a 100-shot clip in the magazine, maybe a couple of the smaller 50-shell drums in his coat pockets . . . and that was it. Faroli, so far as we knew, was unarmed. All he could do was try to shake his enemy off.

Or was it? He'd lost McGrath for the moment, and we saw a tiny pinpoint of fire twinkling at the muzzle of the Thompson as the racer rose under the Bristol's belly and the Irishman raised the gun. Then Faroli skidded away in a flat turn and dropped the biplane's nose into a spin. McGrath followed him down and fired again from above as he pulled out of it. No hits. Faroli stood the Bristol on its tail and clawed his way back up almost to our level. And so it went on, the two planes banking, looping, rolling around one another as McGrath jockeyed for position and Faroli threw him off. Finally, as the Irishman was reloading the submachine-gun, the Bristol went into a falling leaf – a series of alternate sideslips that lost height rapidly without gaining any ground. The racer spiralled down after him, waiting his chance. When he was only about five hundred feet above the ground, Faroli levelled out and began

zig-zagging over a huge chequerboard of woods and fields with McGrath on his tail.

Duffield was flying us around in wide circles overhead. 'What the devil does that chump think he's doing?' he complained. 'The racer can run rings around him at that height – and the silly ass is actually throttling back. Dash it all, the poor blighter's going to get it in the neck!'

He was right. Faroli was flying slower and slower, the shadow of the Bristol gliding lazily over the hedges and ditches as McGrath flew jubilantly in to sit the racer down on top of him. What was the crazy sonofabitch up to?

We soon found out. The silver monoplane was far more manoeuvrable – and much faster – than the old two-seater. Like I said, it was also nose heavy. Taken together, these things meant that it must have a much higher stalling speed. Faroli, in fact, was tempting his enemy to fly too slow . . . because if the few shells he had left were going to tell, McGrath couldn't rely on a passing shot: he had to match his speed with the Bristol's to give him the opportunity to aim properly and finish the job. He floated in over the Bristol's tail and settled the racer down. He can't have been more than twenty feet above him. He was leaning over the edge of the cockpit with the gun when Faroli looked up and suddenly jammed on full flaps.

Flying abruptly into a solid cushion of air, the Bristol rose like one of the *Tribune*'s elevators in front of the racer's nose.

McGrath's reaction was instinctive. He dropped one hand to the stick and yanked it back in a panic. The monoplane reared like a startled horse. The airscrew bit frantically into the atmosphere. But he hadn't enough way on him. The nose dropped and he stalled.

A lightweight, nose-heavy ship like that needs a thousand feet to dive out of a dead stall. McGrath was flying at five hundred – and his plane was as stalled as anything that ever flew. There was nothing to do but watch him die. He smashed straight into the deck on the edge of a wood. A puff of brown smoke marbled with orange flame . . . and then he was just an oily cloud boiling up into the sky.

Faroli didn't even circle the spot. He crammed on speed and started to climb. When he was up to five thousand, he headed for Lake Huron and made a series of sweeps over the sunlit water. He must have known the veteran bomber's course and height, and decided to intercept her there. If he'd noticed us he gave no sign.

The old Vickers flew out of the sun ten minutes later. Faroli saw her before we did. He whipped the Bristol around in a vertical bank and sped across until he was flying alongside. We

could see him frantically gesticulating to the muffled, helmeted figure in the open pilot's cockpit. He was bareheaded, poor bastard, and I guess she must have recognised that frozen face because she started a return tic-tac service right away.

Faroli was coming across with an act that could have won him top billing on the halls. The B circuit, that is. He turned up the collar of his coat, pulled down the brim of a non-existent hat, flexed his biceps to indicate strength, and then pointed at the tail of the Vickers as he mimed a gunfight with the forefinger and thumb of each hand. Smokey Hernandez looked over her shoulder. She didn't get it.

Faroli pointed at the bomber's empty front cockpit and drew a finger suggestively across his throat. Then he went through the hoods-with-guns routine again and jerked his thumb at the Vimy's fuselage. Smokey must have been suspicious because of the absence of her navigator-mechanic, doubly on the alert when she saw Faroli materialise unexpectedly, because this time she did catch on. She gestured toward the gun-mounting circling the front cockpit and mimed herself firing the Thompson attached to it at the rear of the plane. Faroli shook his head violently and held up six fingers. There were half a dozen soldiers stashed in that tail.

The girl half rose in her seat and spread her hands. What the hell can I do then? Faroli told her. He pointed at her, walked the forefinger and middle finger of one hand along the cowling beside his windshield, indicated the bomber's wings and then his own . . . and beckoned urgently.

'I say!' Duffield crowed. 'He's inviting the filly aboard! He actually wants her to swap ships in mid-air! What a daring stunt!'

'Holy Mother of God!' Mulligan exploded. For an Irish Protestant, the expression implied a certain degree of astonishment.

They were right, too. Smokey Hernandez was about to perform the most perilous wing walking stunt of her career . . . before an audience of three. She too might have thought she was back at Joinville Falls. Except that this time it was at five thousand feet instead of five hundred – and there was no hidden parachute.

She must have wedged something, a satchel or a large purse maybe, on the floor of the cockpit to keep the stick steady. Then she levered herself out and crawled back to the centre-section. The Vimy lurched on, with Faroli's Bristol ten feet away to the starboard, as she transferred herself gingerly to the lower wing and began edging outwards among the struts

and bracing wires. The starboard motor, with its hot cowling and flame belching from the exhaust stubs, was the first obstacle. She had to flatten herself on the fabric to squeeze under that. Then it was back to the old routine and the familiar walk – if you customarily take your constitutional a mile off the ground with a 150 mph wind shrieking around you, and you don't suffer from vertigo.

'I'd seen it before, of course. But somehow, up here at the same level, it was different. It looked . . . well, kind of dangerous. I glanced down – a long way down – at the lake and swallowed. My ears were hurting and I could feel the sweat cold on my upper lip. I stole one at Howie. A blue vein in the hollow of his temple was trying to jump out of his skull. He was chewing frantically, feeding stick after stick of gum into the slit like it was only three days to Christmas. Duffield's blue eyes were popping. 'Why,' he cried, 'I do believe that's Smokey!' It took a long time for the penny to drop, but finally he made the jackpot.

The Vimy's square-cut wings are wide and deep. There's plenty of room to move around, and plenty of stuff to hang on to – until you get to the last pair of struts. But between them and the wingtip there's several feet of ice-smooth, bare, curved fabric that must be the loneliest spot in creation if you happen to be lying on it while the ship's in the air. Likewise the outer section of the Bristol's much smaller wingspan. Smokey had somehow to traverse these two wide open spaces and grab the first pair of struts on Faroli's plane without being hurled into infinity by the wind.

Faroli tried it wingtip to wingtip, jockeying the Bristol recklessly close, so that the two ships were rising and falling in the airstream only two or three feet apart. No dice. Smokey clung on to the strut with one hand and stretched out. She couldn't even make her own wingtip, let alone the Bristol's strut. She tried crawling out along the bare surface, but the wind knocked her over and she had to fling herself flat and grab the leading edge of the wing to avoid being blown away. Finally Faroli waved her back and signalled that he was going for it another way.

Right then, like a demon king in a pantomime, a huge man brandishing a Thompson appeared in the bomber's empty rear cockpit. They must have had a spyhole bored in the freight compartment hatch and suddenly realised it was look-no-hands. Another tough-looking egg squeezed up beside him and started waving his arms about. We could see their mouths opening and shutting as they yelled, gesturing furiously at their pilot out on the wingtip. The sound of Mulligan's champing jaws died

away. 'That's Homer,' he shouted mintily in my ear. 'What d'you figure he's sayin'?'

'Come home, all is forgiven,' I offered. 'End of an Odyssey.'

Homer shouted and beckoned again, and then raised the Thompson threateningly. His companion dragged down his arm and shook his head. Don't do it, buddy. You wanna die? Remember where we are, for Chrissake! Smokey turned her head and saw them – and then looked away.

Faroli had throttled back the Bristol and dropped astern. Now he echeloned in even closer, flying close behind the bomber with his port wing overlapping the Vimy's starboard. He manoeuvred the pursuit plane foot by foot in the turbulent air until his outer struts were lined up with those joining the huge wings of the Vimy. In that position, the spinning blades of his prop were dangerously close to the bigger ship's wingtip. He beckoned the girl to try again.

The head of a third hood was struggling up between Homer and his mate. He was yelling too. Then Homer saw the Bristol and caught on. Faroli must have been hidden from him before by the bulk of the bomber's motor. The pilot hadn't just been taking exercise. She hadn't even gone out of her mind. She was going to escape . . . and leave them to die.

We were flying level with them, about a hundred feet away. We saw expressions of disbelief and rage and fear chase themselves across Homer's face. He raised the gun again. If he was going down, he was going to take the others with him.

Smokey was standing up, holding on to the Vimy's rear strut. She inched toward the trailing edge of the wing, her eyes fixed on the varnished spruce front strut of the Bristol, rising and falling five feet away. Her flying coat was plastered to her thighs by the wind. She looked at the three-foot gap between the two wings, bit her lip – and let go her handhold. She lurched away and stepped across the gap.

For an agonising moment she had a foot on each wing. Then the Bristol sank a little and she overbalanced and pitched forward. The wind hurled her against the strut. She wrapped her arms frantically around it and held on. 'Jesus!' said Mulligan.

Homer fired then. Flame stabbed from the muzzle of the Thompson as he swayed upright in the Vimy's cockpit. The range was okay. His aim was fine. He would have got the girl, and he might even have shot down the Bristol . . . if he hadn't forgotten in his fury that there was an airscrew whirling around between the gun and its target. We could hear the scream of the Vimy's starboard motor, as the prop disintegrated and freed it of load, over the roar of our own engines. Robbed suddenly of one screw, the bomber yawed sickeningly to the

right. Homer staggered in the cockpit, loosing off the rest of the drum at the sky. And he must have stumbled against the stick too, because suddenly the crippled plane rolled away to port and went into a tailspin. Someone fell out and hurtled away toward the lake like a spider dropping a web. Only there wasn't any web. The bomber spun faster and faster, its wings flashing in the sun as it corkscrewed down, dwindling against the sparkling water until a spreading burst of white hid it from view. When the column of foam and steam had subsided, there was only a single puff of yellow smoke above the lake to mark where she'd gone in.

By the time we located the Bristol again, Faroli was already helping the girl into the second cockpit. Still ignoring us, he flew away toward the southwest with the Tri-motor hot on his tail. When he was over Bay City, he banked and turned through ninety degrees to head south-east. 'Where the hell does he think he's going?' Mulligan demanded. 'Detroit? Pittsburg? Washington?'

'Wherever is it?' I said, 'it won't be Chicago. And wherever it is, you ain't gonna be there to welcome him home. Look!' I waved out of the cabin window. The cloudbank we'd seen earlier had spread a long way farther south, and the Bristol was aiming for it fast.

'The sonofabitch!' Mulligan said.

Faroli was five hundred feet above the strato-cumulus mass when he turned around in his cockpit and hung the old Indian sign on us. Then he shoved the stick forward and dived into the cotton wool.

Duffield tried to follow him but it was hopeless. We came out in the clear somewhere over Grand Rapids and there wasn't an airplane in the sky.

Mulligan's face was dark with rage. I clapped him on the shoulder sympathetically. 'It could happen to a bishop,' I said.

He was slapping his pockets. 'It's not that,' he snarled. 'I'm fresh out of gum.'

I laughed. He gets the dope on both sides in the booze war and knows he can't use it because his boss takes payola; a hood he's been after for months falls into his hands and then wriggles out again; he finds out everything about the guy's activities – except why; he gets a free grandstand seat at the big showdown and then loses the star. After all that he expects to find a stick of gum in his pants pocket! That's what I like about Howie: he's just a romantic at heart.

EPILOGUE – GEORGE STEVENS

'The gangster boss is always vigilant for the tell-tale symptoms of a collapse among his killers . . . lighting too many cigarettes and tossing them aside after a few superficial puffs; drinking coffee in jerky sips; failing to pull the tie up snugly to the collar in dressing. Detecting any of these symptoms, the boss redoubles his vigilance. The patient may snap out of it. If after a week's observation he has doubts as to his condition, he stages a conclusive test, in this wise: A party is organised to make the rounds of the whoopee spots. The patient is taken along. Apparently by accident, he meets half-a-dozen pretty girls in different places. Each one is nice to him. Each one, in fact, tries to vamp him. They are plants. If he does not react, that settles it; the boss knows the worst has come to pass – "When a guy don't fall for a broad, he's through" – his killer has turned yellow. The remedy follows. He is bumped off. His colleagues get him drunk and take him for a ride. It happens often in Chicago.'

F. D. PASLEY, *Al Capone*

A shirt-sleeved technician tilted the shallow bath so that water washed over the enlarged photographs again. In the harsh light streaming down from the green-shaded laboratory lamp, lines of handwriting and columns of figures swam more clearly up through the surface of the liquid from the prints. The three men standing around the workbench leaned closer to peer at them. 'You did a good job there, Farrell,' George Stevens said. 'This is just the kind of stuff we wanted. With this material to start on, we should be able to initiate an operation that'll bust the Syndicate wide open money-wise.'

Bruno Farrell grinned crookedly. 'If you don't mind my saying so,' he replied, 'thank Christ!'

'Glad to be out of it, are you?'

'I should say! It's not too comfortable in Chicago when you have the Mafia *and* the North-Siders lining up to take you for a ride – and no shoulder to cry on.'

'Well, if it's any consolation, it was worth it,' the third man

said. He had come into the room after Stevens and Farrell had started studying the prints.

'Excuse me,' said Stevens. 'Farrell – this is Elmer J. Irey, of the Treasury Department's enforcement branch. Mr Irey has been placed in charge of a special intelligence unit by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, and he's working presently on that tax evasion routine I told you about.'

'Glad to know you, sir,' Farrell said. He shook hands.

'Likewise,' said Irey. 'The evidence you've come up with will help us one day to put Capone behind bars. We already started a case against his elder brother, Ralph.'

'You mean Bottles? No kidding!'

'Ralph Bottles Capone, that's it. He admitted a tax liability of four thousand dollars, but said he was skint and offered a thousand in settlement. The local office was all for accepting it, but the IRS ordered me to run a check – and I discovered that on the day he'd made the offer he'd withdrawn over $24,000 from a safe deposit box.'

'Bottles pleading poverty?' Farrell said. 'That's a laugh. He spends almost as much as Al.'

'You can say that again. One of my boys found out that he'd passed nearly two million through five separate accounts, under five different names, in less than four years. So we shall be going after him! Your boy never filed a tax return in his crooked life. With the dope you have here, if that Supreme Court decision goes our way, we'll be able to hang a rap on him, too.'

'It won't be too soon for me,' Farrell said.

Stevens turned to the technician. 'Thanks, Hal,' he said. 'Have a set sent up to my office when they're glazed and dry, will you?'

'Any time, Mr Stevens,' the technician said.

They ducked under a row of drying prints pegged to a line, and left the laboratory. Outside, the late afternoon sun was still warm, and pigeons were preening themselves among the fallen leaves on the lawns around the Capitol. Stevens looked at his watch. It was almost five. 'After all that,' he said, 'the least the department can do is offer you dinner. What say we repair to a certain blind pig I know of and have a cocktail first?'

Farrell looked embarrassed. 'It's kind of you, sir,' he said awkwardly, 'but my co-pilot's in town. She – uh – he . . . that is to say they, don't know anything of my connection here. It'll look kind of odd if I stay away too long. I already had to think up a wacky story about a grafting politician to explain my being in Washington at all.'

Stevens clapped him on the shoulder. 'No sweat,' he said. 'Off you go, my boy – and see you give her a good time!'

They watched him stride away down the broadwalk – a neat, compact figure with the head held a little stiffly but plenty of spring in the step. 'Good man,' Irey said. 'Must have been kind of a shock, finding yourself a mobster when all you've done before is ride a bicycle around Massachusetts as a humble PA.' He grinned and then added: 'But life's full of surprises. My job's to nail customs and tax and narcotics frauds – and here I am working my guts out to send up a murderer!'

Stevens watched Farrell out of sight around a corner. 'He's a callous bastard in some ways,' he said reflectively. 'But he's straight, and that's worth everything. Because he's straight, he's heading for the biggest surprise of all.'

'Come again?'

'They call it cosmetic surgery,' Stevens said. 'Skin grafts and all that. Farrell don't know it, but he's going to have that scar removed and go on back to Chicago with a new face. We need men like him in there. I booked the hospital bed for next week.'

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BOOTLEG ANGEL

The Federal cops wanted to nail Capone – and nail him good. But Chicago was so loused up with crooked justice that they hadn't a chance of getting a single charge to stick.

So that was where Farrell came in. Farrell was a cop, a cop who could look like a hood, act like one and more importantly get himself in with Capone. He was also a superb flyer, and when he thought of bootlegging booze from Canada by plane, Capone jumped at the idea. But Farrell had enemies and when they cottoned on to the plan, he soon found that most of Chicago's underworld was gunning for his blood.